

Done right, tattoos can be the ultimate visual declarations of personality.
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Zhengding is an easy escape from Beijing, far enough away from the smokestacks of Shijiazhuang to qualify as a rural retreat.
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Although the artifacts on show are from Africa, visitors are likely to feel a sense of familiarity.
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Photo by Li Yue

Fate of 798 Hangs in Balance

By Xiaoxia

A public letter calling for the preservation of the 798 art zone has again put the Bauhaus-style former factory complex in the media spotlight. The letter is the latest salvo in an ongoing dispute between the property owner and the tenants of Beijing's avant-garde headquarters.

The friction is a result of continuing uncertainty about the future of the zone, which is coming to a head with the approach of the 2005 expiry date of the rental contracts at 798.

The public letter was signed by artists living in the 798 area. It describes the present environment as "unpleasant," and demands certain rights from property owner Sevenstar International Huadian Scientific Group. The demands range from the establishment of a communication channel with Sevenstar management, to allowing taxis to enter the zone. Although Sevenstar has not made an official response to the letter, there has reportedly been some relaxation in control of the zone.

Relations between the two sides started to deteriorate shortly after the "honeymoon" period around mid 2003 and reached a nadir in April this year, when the ill-fated Dashanzi Art Festival was due to be held at 798. Two days before the April 22 opening ceremony, Sevenstar withdrew permission for the festival and banned all public vehicles, including taxis, from entering the zone. Since then, the artist residents have embarked of a campaign to "regain the identity of 798," in the words of artist and campaign initiator Huang Yi.

Built in 1954 with assistance from East Germany, 798 was a mysterious military factory, then an electronics factory, before its rebirth as a haven for Beijing's young and flourishing artistic community. It formed part of a larger group of buildings at Dashanzi in Beijing's north-east, including the factories coded 798, 706, 707 and 11 institutes engaged in electronics research and production.

Increasing market competition since the 1980s forced the factories to shut down, leaving nothing but the enormous Bauhaus-style plant area, as well as more than 4,000 laid-off workers and around 20,000 retired workers.

In December 2000, Sevenstar purchased 798 and five other nearby sites. The plants were slated for demolition to make way for a proposed electronic industry park.

Financial burden forced Sevenstar to lease out some of the buildings, and in 2002, Huang Yi, Xu Yong and other artists moved into the area. Gradually the special architectural design, free atmosphere, vast space and especially the low cost of rentals attracted artists both local and from abroad. Galleries, studios and cafes opened one after another, and an art zone the whole world was soon talking about appeared almost overnight. The *New York Times* in a recent article compared 798 with the Soho of a few dozen years ago.

The zone became hot, and the land increased in value. Rent for one square meter at 798 one year ago was 0.7 yuan per day, today it is 2.5 yuan, almost the same as that of a B grade downtown office building. "Sevenstar acts like a little boy who has suddenly found a large present in his doorway," commented Robert Bernell, owner of Timezone, an arts book store at 798.

But what worries the artists most are the plans to establish a new electronics park on the site next year. If that happens, the art zone will disappear from the map in 2005, when their leases expire.

Li Xiangqun, an art professor at Tsinghua University presented a proposal to the Beijing People's Congress, calling for a moratorium on the relocation plan, a re-evaluation of the cultural value of the 798 art zone and a reconsideration of the electronic park plan. In his report, Li identified five key values of 79, namely architecture, culture media, history, tourism and social

Athens Is Ready



Lao Lishi and Li Ting, members of China's Olympic diving team, get in some last-minute practice in Athens on Tuesday.
Xinhua Photo

By Sun Yongjian

Tomorrow the Olympic flame shines its light over the Athens Olympic Stadium, signaling the opening of the 2004 Olympic Games.

At a press conference in Athens yesterday, Giana Angelopoulos-Daskalaki, president of the Athens Organizing Committee for the Games of 28th Olympiad, gave a speech on the preparations for the games.

"Tomorrow we open the Olympic Games and we have reported to the International Olympic Committee (IOC) that we are ready for the Games to begin," she said, describing the past four years as "Four years of discipline, four years of teamwork."

"We have created an Olympic City here in Athens. Our city is painted in Olympic colors and ready for the competition. Moreover our people are ready. Our staff of Athens 2004 and our volunteers are ready. We will show the world our country's traditions and modern achievements. Many have been surprised by the Athens they have discovered. The world will discover what modern Greeks are. Modern Greeks have the same ambitions and abilities as the ancient Greeks. When they make a promise, they deliver," Angelopoulos-Daskalaki said.

Referring to ticket sales, she said that a new record had been set on August 11, with 92,970 tickets sold. This brings total ticket sales to over 2.7 million. In football, 70 percent of the seats have been filled.

"Our revenues have reached a total of 174 million euros, while our target was 183 million, which means we have reached 94 percent of our target. In Thessaloniki we have a capacity crowd, in Heraklion 64 percent, Patra 74 percent and Volos 77 percent," she said.

As to whether the money that has gone to the Olympic Games has been well spent, she said the works had affected Greece in a very positive way. Every organizing committee had to follow the recommendations and rules of the IOC. Everything that has been built has a future beyond the Games.

Regarding transportation, the works that have been completed will change the atmosphere of Athens and improve the environment.

"We have contributed to the transformation of major districts of Athens, and other areas have been upgraded, like Nikaia, Lioussia, Peristeri and others," she said, "These works have been completed for the Games, but the important thing is that they will still be here the day after the Games, and for the next generations to enjoy."

influence. The proposal was co-signed by 14 congress representatives.

Sevenstar itself is maintaining a poker face on the issue of 798's future. All the company has said publicly so far is that discussions are on-going, the case is being examined, and an answer will be given in the future. Space at 798 is still available to the public for rent.

In fact the future of 798 might well rest with the Beijing Planning and Construction Committee, however its public statements on the matter have also been pointedly circumspect.

"This is a problem that needs to be treated carefully," says Zhu Jianguang, president of Beijing Planning and Design Institute. Zhu argues that China's ageing electronics industry faces numerous problems. Getting it out of the doldrums will require a major shake-up of the industry structure, with a focus on high-tech R&D. To this end, the plan to utilize 798 as part

of an electronics park is rational. However the special nature of the area will also be taken into account when drawing up the plan, according to Zhu.

"Excellent modern architect should be protected," Zhu says. He points out that buildings that reflect the history and style of a city at a certain period of time, or are of a high architectural value, need to be protected. The buildings in 798 do constitute such excellent modern architecture, he says, and 798 could without doubt develop into a cultural phenomena, however an art zone is not the only option for ensuring the protection of modern buildings.

There are three possible outcomes for 798: the artist's and studios will stay and thrive, the community will be uprooted and forced to relocate, or some sort of compromise will be reached between the two sides. Robert Bernell says the third option still remains a possibility, but for now, is taking a "let's wait and see" view on the future of 798.

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Free Personal Classifieds

Beijing Today is launching a free personal classifieds service. For sale and wanted ads, situations wanted and vacant, language exchange and personals, and rentals will be

printed free of charge. Email your personal classifieds (in English and Chinese) to info@ynet.com. Personal classifieds should conform to relevant laws and regulations.

Proposal Calls for Province to Directly Administer Counties

By Liu An
A study on the administrative area structure Guangdong Province has been launched, *Beijing News* reported Monday.
According to the article, the study will investigate problems raised in a report by National People's Congress deputy Li Defeng related to the current administrative area structure and city in charge of county system.
Li suggests in his report that putting provincial governments directly in charge of counties

would facilitate their economic development.
The report argues that under the current system, indirect communication between provincial and county level governments results in information loss and inefficiency.
In addition, the current indirect management structure causes problems such as overstaffing and inflated management costs.
Li's proposal to make the administration of counties the direct responsibility of provincial govern-

ments is in line with China's constitution. It specifies that the direct management should cover the areas of planning, trade, land and resources, transportation, water conservancy, construction, finance, economic management, and personnel management.
An official from Ministry of Civil Affairs told *Beijing Today* that the system of county under direct control of the province government already existed in Hainan Province. Also some county economic development

zones are administered directly by provincial governments in order to meet the requirements of hastening economic improvement.
The Guangdong province government has expressed support for Li's suggestion, citing certain problems that have arisen under the current system of county controlled by city.
The proposal is currently being assessed by relevant departments in Guangdong, Sun Yat-Sen University and the Ministry of Civil Affairs.



Seventy percent of the foundations for a new bridge linking Shenzhen with Hong Kong has been completed. The bridge is part of the Western Corridor Project, linking Hong Kong directly with Western China.
Photo by Photocom

Beijing Sharing Olympic Market with Hong Kong

By Chu Meng
The eighth Beijing-Hong Kong Economic Co-operation Symposium and Olympic Economy Market Promotion Conference will be held on September 2 and 3 in Hong Kong. The conference aims to attract investors from the special administrative region with Olympic-oriented commercial programs and to integrate economic and marketing advantages of the two metropolises, organizers told a press conference in Beijing Monday.
The two-day event, held against the backdrop of Beijing's preparations for the 2008 Olympic Games, will seek bids for more than 110 projects with a total planned investment of US \$12 billion, said Zhang Mao, vice-mayor of Beijing. More than half of the projects involve infrastructure, including the construction of sports venues and related facilities, expansion of the urban railway network and gas supply.
Beijing will offer more than 300 highly-paid positions to qualified Hong Kong applicants, according to Zhang Zude, vice-director of the Beijing Personnel Bureau.
Zhang said the most attractive positions are with the Beijing Development and Reform Commission, as it is the first time the capital has invited overseas professionals to work in the local government. The commission will hire three senior economic specialists with an annual salary of 500,000 yuan. Positions such as lawyers, finance experts and senior administrative managers, which require a high degree of expertise are also on offer.
The annual salary for most of the 300 posts are over 160,000 yuan (US \$19,300), and one Beijing-based company is even inviting a chief technology officer with an annual salary of US \$180,000.
During the two-day event, seminars will also be held for high-level government officials and business people from both cities to explore business co-operation opportunities arising from the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA). Some major seminars will be held on logistics, international industrial funds, lawyer exchanges and overseas funds entering Chinese commercial banks, said the vice-mayor.

Public to Have Say in Environment Protection

By Xu Yan
The State Environmental Protection Administration has recently approved a provisional regulation concerning public hearings on environment-related administrative approvals.
According to the regulation, public hearings will be held on small projects that might cause unpleasant odor, noise, residue or other forms of pollution that affect the living environment of local residents.

Medium and large-sized projects that could have a great impact on the environment will also be subject to public hearings.
In addition, public hearings will be held on development programs in sectors including industry, agriculture, forestry, energy and tourism that could possibly have side effects on the environment and are directly linked to the public interest.
Vice-minister of administration Pan Yue was quoted in Tuesday's

Beijing Youth Daily as saying that the general public should be given more opportunities to take part in the policy making process.
He urged environmental authorities to regulate administrative approvals and protect the interests of all citizens, businesses or legal persons, and other organizations.
In addition to enacting the regulations, the administration will undertake further measures to improve its work, Pan said.

An environmental policy system based on the participation of the public, experts and environmental authorities will be established, Pan said.
During the drafting of environmental laws, the opinions of legal experts, local environmental group members and members of the general public will be solicited.
Environmental regulations will be examined regularly and amended or abolished accordingly, Pan said.

Constraints Broken Down on Labor Cooperation Services

By Liu An
New measures on qualifications for labor cooperation services have been issued by the Ministry of Commerce and State Administration for Industry and Commerce.
A ministry spokesperson told *Beijing Youth Daily* Tuesday that all private and foreign-owned enterprises able to meet relevant requirements can apply for qualification.
The new measures differ from the current ones in four areas. The most significant change involves contracting of foreign projects and labor cooperation

services. Enterprises will now be assigned qualification for labor cooperation services on their contracted foreign projects. Previous enterprise ownership constraints will be removed, and there will be just one standard criteria for all enterprises.
Applicant enterprises must register more than three years with more than 500 million yuan in registered capital, or over 300 million for central and western region enterprises. It is also a requirement that businesses operate well, with an asset to debt rate of less than 50 percent.

British Chamber of Commerce Launches Innovation Awards

By Alice Ron
The British Chamber of Commerce in China (BCCC) in partnership with the *Economic Observer* yesterday launched a new award scheme aimed at encouraging innovative start-up enterprises managed by British-educated or British-trained individuals. The BCCC is the first foreign chamber of commerce in Beijing to offer such an award for entrepreneurship and innovation.
Candidates with a viable and innovative business idea, supported by a sound business plan, have a chance to win first, second or third prizes in either the

innovative start-up or innovative enterprise category. Prizes include travel to the UK, accommodation in London, a course in entrepreneurship and meetings at Britain's top institutions.
All applicants must have a key manager who has been educated or trained in the UK and a unique and innovative product, service or marketing strategy. They will be judged by an award selection committee of senior managers who will review the applications and select a shortlist of candidates on the basis of set criteria. The awards will be presented at a ceremony at the beginning of December.

Anonymous HIV Testing Offered to Beijing Citizens

By Chu Meng
Beijing citizens in all districts and counties can now receive free and anonymous HIV tests and AIDS-related consultations in special clinics established by the Beijing Center for Disease Control and Prevention, *Beijing Youth Daily* reported yesterday.
Since the center started providing free HIV/AIDS testing services in 2003, over 1,600 new HIV/AIDS cases have been identified in Beijing, ranking it seventh overall in China.
However according to He Xiong, deputy director of the center, there are a number of high-risk groups in which people are reluctant to give their real names over fears of discrimination from family and society, and the actual number of new cases is likely to be significantly higher than the reported figure.
Based on such concerns, the center has launched an anonymous service, which requires medical workers to record code numbers rather than names when providing blood tests and consultations.

Regulation to Clarify Compensation Case Procedure

By Liu An
A regulation on trying state confirmed compensation cases would be issued shortly, the Supreme People's Court has announced. The regulation is intended to reduce the time required to lodge such compensation applications and ensure the fairness of trials.
According to a spokesman for the Supreme People's Court, the regulation is currently being revised and is due to take effect from October 1.
Under the regulation, irregularities in local level court hearings should be investigated by intermediate courts, and a judicial committee should hear cases involving irregularities in intermediate courts.
All state confirmed compensation cases should be placed on file for investigation and prosecution. In addition, the regulation stipulates the allotted time for accepting and trying such cases, the standard for accepting such cases and provides guidelines on how to assess the original trial and the extent of any irregularities.

New Policies to Tackle Money Laundering

By Sun Yongjian
The State Administration of Foreign Exchange (SAFE) issued a news release on Monday, outlining new policies that have been formulated to tackle money laundering.
A counter money laundering database consisting of three "lists" should be established, the news release said.
The "white list" is made up of enterprises and individuals declared "clean" after being examined by SAFE.
Enterprises and individuals on the "black list" are those suspected of committing crimes and violating regulations in relation to exchange transactions.
Those enterprises and individuals whose transaction activities cannot be proven to be innocent will be placed on the "close attention list."
Statistics revealed by SAFE show that among the over 180,000 enterprises and individuals it examined from March to December 2003, 36 cases of violation of regulations, involving a total of US \$20 million were uncovered.
Another 123 cases, involving almost US \$414 million have been handed to the police for investigation.

Four Licenses Issued for Subscriber TV Channels

By Sun Yongjian
Four domestic TV and film institutions have received licenses to open subscriber TV channels, *Beijing News* reported Tuesday.
The move ends China Central TV (CCTV)'s monopoly on subscriber TV programs, the news office of the State Administration of Radio Film and Television (SARFT) confirmed to *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.
The four new licence holders are Shanghai TV, China Cable Television, TV Satellite Channel Programs Center and a consortium made up of Beijing Broadcast TV and Film Group, People's Central Broadcasting Station, Tianjin TV, Shandong Radio and TV station and Anhui TV.
Under SARFT regulations, the licenses for national subscriber channels will be valid for three years, and the four approved should complete preparatory work within one year.
Li Jun, manager of the department of external relations at Shanghai Interactive Television, the mother corporation of Shanghai TV, told *Beijing News* that over 10 applications had been lodged with SARFT for licenses.

Private Capital to Flow into Airports

By Annie Wei
Sources from a national civil aviation airports meeting held in Shanghai Tuesday say that the Civil Aviation of Administration of China (CAAC) will adopt different management practices for different types of airports, according to a report in yesterday's *Beijing News*.
The report said CAAC will allow larger airports with strong commercial ability to enter the capital market. Medium-scale airports will be responsible for their own commercial projects, while their public facilities will be open to government investment. Small-scale airports are encouraged to seek domestic private capital while exploiting land-development, tourism promotion and other resources.
The CAAC was quoted in the report as saying that since the management rights of some airports were transferred to local governments last year, its role has changed to promoting the airport investment system and management concept. In this way, local governments will become the main investors in airports, but collaboration with the CAAC will still be required.

Beijing to Implement Euro III

By Xu Yan
The Beijing government confirmed last Thursday that it will implement the Euro III auto emission standard. Due to take effect from July 1 next year, Beijing will be the first city in China to adopt Euro III according to a report in last Friday's *Beijing Youth Daily*.
The Beijing Environmental Protection Bureau says Euro III's maximum content of sulfur in emission gas is 0.015, much lower than the 0.050 maximum of Euro II, the current standard.
The report said that once the new standard is adopted, petrol that does meet the requirements will not be allowed to be used. China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation and China National Petroleum Corporation have already started developing petrol that meets the new standard. The new type of petrol will be put onto the market on July 1 next year.

Shell Withdraws from Gas Transmission Project

By Sun Yongjian

Two years of cooperation between major domestic and foreign oil companies in a project to transmit natural gas from western China through underground pipelines to eastern regions ended last Tuesday, when UK-based Royal Dutch/Shell Group announced its withdrawal from the deal.

Domestic oil giant PetrolChina Co. said in a statement issued on its website on August 4 that the cooperative structure agreement signed with overseas investors for the gas transmission project on July 4, 2002 had come to an end. The project, however, would continue and the pipeline would be completed and open for trial transmission by October 1 in line with the original



Shell China Chairman Wang Yuzhang has taken his company out of the west-east-gas transmission project.

plan, the statement added.

Commercial gas transmission should begin by January 1, 2005, according to the company.

Nick Wood, external affairs director of Shell Companies in China, confirmed the news to *Beijing Today* on

Monday, adding, "The different sides in the project have not been able to reach an agreement that satisfied everyone involved."

The agreement mentioned in the PetrolChina statement was signed in 2002 by that company and three major foreign oil companies, namely Shell, US-based Exxon Mobile Co. and Russia's Gazprom OAO. PetrolChina held a 50 percent stake in the project, the three foreign companies a total 45 percent stake and the remaining five percent went to Sinopec.

With the collapse of cooperation, PetrolChina will be solely responsible for final development of the project.

The west-to-east gas transmission project was launched on July 4, 2002

in accordance with the demands of the government's Tenth Five-year Plan for power generation, the chemical industry, industrial fuel and natural gas for urban civil use, and was designed to be able to pump 12 billion cubic meters a year. The 4,000-kilometer pipeline passes through 10 provinces and cities.

The deal fell through because in negotiations, the three foreign companies demanded to each receive 15 percent of fixed returns on investment, but PetrolChina refused because risks exist in all of the investment, a report on Sina.com speculated last Wednesday.

However, PetrolChina was capable of finishing the project on its own, the report said.

China Entering New Era of Auto Financing



By Sun Yongjian

SAIC GM Auto Finance Co. became the first automaker to receive official licensing to offer car loan services in China last Thursday.

The China Banking Regulatory Commission (CBRC) announced through its website that it had approved the Shanghai-registered company to open business in this country.

SAIC GM Auto Finance was co-es-

tablished by GM Auto Finance Service Co. and SAIC Auto Group Financial Co. in December 2003 with 500 million yuan of registered capital.

"So far, everything is going smoothly, including staff training, establishment of technical systems and hardware construction," company Vice President Xu Guozhen told *Beijing Today* last Friday.

"The company plans to open for busi-

ness by the middle of next year, partly because government regulations require a six-month preparatory period."

"The current period is a rare opportunity for auto financing companies to develop business, as banks' credit scales are shrinking due to the demands of the nation's macro regulatory control," noted Wang Zaixiang, president of the China Vehicle Technology Researching Institute.

"Auto finance companies are capable of providing credit conditions more favorable than those in banks, which will in turn promote credit-based auto sales and spur national economic growth."

Consumers certainly stand to benefit, in Wang's opinion. "Auto finance companies are capable of providing the lowest prices and most favorable interest rates, even as low as zero percent," he explained.

Comm Bank Targets Hong Kong IPO

By Sun Yongjian

The state-owned Bank of Communications may be the next major Chinese financial institution to go public, a move that got more likely with the approval of its shareholding reform program by the State Council, the *International Financial News* reported on Monday.

Jiang Chaoliang, chairman of the board of Bank of Communications, told that newspaper the bank's target was to list in Hong Kong early next year.

The Bank of Communications is pushing hard to realize that aim before the Bank of China and the Construction Bank of China make similar moves, Jiang said.

"Preparatory work is ongoing, but the final date will rely on the basic condition of the state's macro economy, economic conditions in Europe, the United States and Japan, and the condition of the Hong Kong capital market," he added.

"We are very pressed for time, because at the end of this year, overseas investors and funds managers will all be on Christmas holiday."

The bank has already finished its financial reorganization process, bringing its balance of non-performing loans to 19.8 billion yuan, or 3.43 percent of its total assets. That is down drastically from 13.31 percent only six months ago, but still above the international standard of two percent.

The Bank of Communications' core capital adequacy ratio is now 5.89 percent and its capital adequacy ratio 8.82 percent.

With HSBC signing a deal to acquire a 19.9 percent stake in the bank last Friday, the Bank of Communications' core capital adequacy ratio should reach 8.43 percent and its capital adequacy ratio 11.62 percent, much higher than the eight percent set out in the Basel Agreement.

Accounting Report Guides Bank Reform

By Sun Yongjian

The Industrial and Commercial Bank of China on Tuesday released a 2,400-page report drafted by international accounting firm Price Waterhouse Coopers that gives specific suggestions for handling of the bank's reform efforts.

The report focuses on corporation governance mechanisms and points out two major bottlenecks blocking reform in the bank. One is excessive centralization of responsibilities, such as for business development, risk administration and internal auditing, on the president, with little attention given to balance of power and supervision. The other main obstacle is that strategies and policies formulated by head-

quarters cannot be passed vertically to basic subsidiaries because bank administrations are too divisive.

After identifying those problems, the report suggests three strategic steps for corporate reform.

The first step is to establish a vertical risk administrative structure and an internal audit structure, both of which would be independent from business sections and subsidiaries. The second is to establish decision-making commissions in the board of directors and among top leadership. Last is to establish new examination and calculation systems specific to each business line, all vertically administrated by headquarters.

BMW Name at Center of Trademark Dispute

By Chu Meng

The Beijing No.1 Intermediate People's Court on Monday received a trademark infringement lawsuit filed by automobile service and maintenance company Beijing Baoma against Beijing Yanbao, a local car dealer licensed by Germany's BMW Group.

Brochures for Yanbao's maintenance service carry the mark of "Beijing Baoma", the exact name of the plaintiff. Therefore, in its indictment, Baoma said the name was intended to deliberately mislead customers into thinking they were receiving Baoma's, not Yanbao's, services.

Beijing Baoma claims to have registered the trademark for the name "baoma", the same as BMW's Chinese name, in 1992, three years before BMW filed for protection of the name.

On June 11, BMW filed a lawsuit against Beijing Baoma for use of the "baoma" name and the case remains unresolved.

Shao Bin, marketing manager at Beijing Yanbao said that after being licensed as an official BMW dealership in 1994, his company always tried to develop their own trademark and never intentionally infringed on other companies' rights, in an interview with *Beijing Morning Post* on Monday.

"This is a complete mistake. In April, we ordered a batch of brochures with the Yanbao name, but the printing company messed up and put on the wrong title. We found the mistake in August and stopped using the brochures. That means we tried to keep clients from seeing those brochures, not that we infringed on Beijing Baoma's trademark," Shao said.

Swiss Bank Buys Millions in Bad Loans

By Sun Yongjian

Swiss banking powerhouse UBS AG announced last Friday that it had signed an agreement with a domestic asset management company to purchase \$185 million of non-performing loans (NPLs), the Guangzhou-based *Private Economy News* reported on Sunday.

The deal marked UBS' first purchase of bad assets in China, the report said.

The auction was organized by China Huarong Asset Management Corporation, one of this country's four asset management corporations. That company was established in 1999 to deal with the NPLs plaguing the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China, one of the country's "big four" state-owned commercial banks.

New Company Gives Chinese Chances to Imitate Gulliver

By Sun Yongjian

Gullivers Travel Associates (GTA), a British travel agent, received a license from Chinese authorities on Wednesday to set up a Chinese subsidiary, the company announced in a press release issued Wednesday.

GTA (China) Co. was established after the necessary license came in from the China National Tourism Administration.

A leading international wholesaler of travel related products, GTA deals only within the travel industry, offering both inbound and domestic travel to suppliers from around the world. Included in its network are more than 1,000 hotels in this country.

The company plans to invest millions of dollars to conduct market research and launch promotional campaigns in 46 Chinese cities including Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu and Chongqing, the press release said. Chinese tour operators will be allowed to share in GTA's global sales net and make use of its specialized database.

GTA global tour net terminals will be installed in airports, railway stations, subway stations and other public sites in many large and medium-sized cities in China, providing tourists with a wide range of tour information.

China Post to Speed Up Mail Service

China Post will launch an "all night flight" delivery program to speed up its Express Mail Service (EMS), a move expected to shorten express package delivery times by up to one day.

The program will take effect in more than 27 provinces of China on August 18. While EMS mail will reach delivery sites faster, prices will not be hiked.

Ma Junsheng, deputy director of the State Post Bureau, said at a news conference in Beijing Tuesday that China Post was devoted to improving its facilities to provide high-quality service to clients.

The "all night flight" program should improve the international competitiveness of China's EMS business, said an unidentified expert. (Xinhua)

Tibet Gets Own Airline

By Sun Yongjian

The Tibet arm of national carrier Air China was established on August 8, making it the region's first airline of its own, the *International Financial Daily* reported on Monday.

The Lhasa-based subsidiary airline would aid the improvement of China's air travel network and promote the development of Tibet, the report said.

The company's fleet should include two Boeing 757-200 and five Airbus A319 aircraft by the end of this year.

More than 10 new air routes will be created connecting Tibet with other regions of China as well as other lines linking sites within the "snowy plateau".

Local Leasing Market Active in Second Quarter

By Chu Meng

Leasing was considerably more active in Beijing's high level office and residential markets in the second quarter of 2004, with multinational corporations' expansion activities the main force behind increasing demand, said the Greater China Property Index released Tuesday by Jones Lang LaSalle.

Boosted by strong performance, many multinationals were actively expanding and seeking accommodations in grade-A buildings in Beijing's Chaoyang and Dongcheng districts, the report showed.

In the face of strong demand, the average office vacancy rate in Beijing is fast approaching the 10 percent level, falling to 11.8 percent from 13.2 percent three months ago. Prime buildings such as the China World Trade Center, Kerry Centre, China Resources Building and Pacific Century Place were almost fully let in the second quarter.

Apartment projects with high-quality finishes and a central location were on average up to 75 percent occupied.

Fed Raises Rate

Washington, August 10 (Reuters) - The US Federal Reserve on Tuesday raised interest rates another quarter of a percentage point to head off potential inflation, saying the economy had been hit by energy costs but was poised for faster growth.

The unanimous decision by the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee moves the benchmark federal funds rate, charged on overnight loans between banks, to 1.5 percent.

In announcing its second rate rise this year, the central bank gave no sign it was prepared to let up on a "measured" campaign to lift the fed funds rate to a more neutral level

despite weak July jobs data.

It raised rates by a quarter point after its last meeting on June 30 – the first increase in four years.

"In recent months, output growth has moderated and the pace of improvement in labor market conditions has slowed. This softness is likely related to the substantial rise in energy prices," the Fed said.

"The economy nevertheless appears poised to resume a stronger pace of expansion going forward," it added.

Investors honed in on the Fed's optimistic tone, with the dollar and stock markets rallying. Bond prices eased in anticipation of more interest-rate rises.

Analyst's Take:

The rise in interest rates has three major reasons: the first is to curb possible inflation; the second reason is the aim of attracting more foreign capital to the American capital market; the third is the \$417.5 billion defense budget signed into law by President Bush on August 5, which has also caused a sharp domestic fiscal expansion. The rate rise is necessary in order to balance the influence of this fiscal expansion.

But the influence of the 0.25 percent rise of the interest rate for the American economy is very slight, so there might be further rises.

The renminbi will definitely not be influenced by the dollar. A stable

interest rate is of key importance for the safety of China's banking system and the stability of the whole financial system. A rise in interest rates could cause a fall in the stock market.

– Lin Zhiyuan, researcher of the Economic Research Institute of the State Development and Reform Commission.

It is not necessary to raise interest rates here because currently the general domestic supply is sufficient, much higher than the general domestic demand. The macro economy has not been threatened by inflation.

– Zhao Xijun, vice president of the Finance and Securities Institute of China, Renmin University (Sun Yongjian)

South Korea Selects New Site for Capital

Seoul, South Korea, August 11 (AP) – South Korea has decided to shift the seat of its capital from Seoul to a rural area further south from the tense border with communist North Korea.

Prime Minister Lee Hai-chan on Wednesday unveiled a \$39.2 billion plan to build the new capital in the Yeongi-Gongju area, 100 miles south of Seoul.

During his election campaign in 2002, President Roh Moo-hyun vowed to build a new capital to take pressure off the overcrowded Seoul and "for balanced development of the nation."

Work to build the new capital will begin in 2007. The government plans to relocate most of its agencies to the new capital by 2014.

About 10 million of South Korea's 48 million people live in Seoul, 40 miles south of the border with the North and within the range of its rockets and artilleries.

Over half the South's total population live either in Seoul or in its satellite cities.

Yahoo and Google Resolve Dispute

August 9 (NewsFactor) – Yahoo and Google said they have resolved a patent dispute over technology used to display online advertisements alongside search results.

The two parties also have resolved a dispute regarding Yahoo's right to buy Google shares in connection with a services agreement.

Under the terms of the settlement, Google will issue 2.7 million shares of Class A common stock to Yahoo. Google, in return, will receive a perpetual license to the patents held by Overture, a Yahoo subsidiary.

In a suit originally filed in April 2002, Overture claimed that Google's AdWords program violated its patents to a "system and method for influencing a position on a search result list generated by a computer network search engine." Overture has since been acquired by Yahoo.

Google will increase the size of its IPO, planned for later this month, from 24.6 million to 25.7 million shares, with the extra shares allocated to Yahoo.

Yahoo said it will sell most of the stock. Yahoo, an early investor in Google, will end up holding a 4.1 percent stake in its rival.

UK Scientists to Clone Embryos

London, August 11 (Reuters) – British scientists said on Wednesday they had received permission to clone human embryos for medical research, thought to be the first such license given in Europe.

Researchers at Newcastle University in northern England will be allowed to create embryos as a source of stem cells to cure diseases, a spokeswoman for the university said.

The go-ahead was given by Britain's reproduction regulator, the Human Fertilization and Embryology Authority (HFEA), the university said.

"It has taken a year of work, and I am most pleased that the HFEA has recognized the potential of this technology in modern medicine," Newcastle University's Dr. Miodrag Stojkovic said in a statement.

The scientists said they plan to duplicate early-stage embryos and extract stem cells from them with the aim of developing new treatments for degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's, Parkinson's and diabetes.

The embryos will be destroyed before they are 14 days old and will never be allowed to develop beyond a cluster of cells the size of a pinhead.

Cloning to create copies of human babies is outlawed in Britain but therapeutic cloning is legal.

Sumitomo Mitsui Announces Bid for UFJ

Tokyo, August 9 (AP) – Japan's Sumitomo Mitsui Financial Group announced a formal bid Monday for a "merger of equals" with rival bank UFJ Holdings Inc., intensifying a takeover battle to create the world's biggest bank.

Sumitomo Mitsui also said it would give troubled UFJ at least 500 billion yen (US\$4.54 billion) in financial aid, countering a bid for UFJ by rival Mitsubishi Tokyo Financial Group.

Sumitomo Mitsui and Mitsubishi Tokyo are two of Japan's biggest banks and a tie-up with either would help UFJ write off bad loans while forming the world's largest bank by assets, surpassing U.S.-based Citigroup Inc.'s US\$1.19 trillion.

UFJ spokesman Minoru Saotome said Monday Japan's fourth-largest bank would examine Sumitomo Mitsui's offer, which was delivered over the weekend.

But he stressed UFJ had no plans to break off ongoing merger talks with Mitsubishi Tokyo even though a court issued an injunction in late July ordering that they be halted following a request by Sumitomo Mitsui. UFJ has appealed the decision to the Tokyo High Court.

Singapore Sees Growth Spurt

Singapore, August 9 (AFP) – Singapore's economy posted its fastest quarterly expansion in 10 years as exports boosted growth in the second quarter to 12.5 percent up from a year ago, lifting the full 2004 forecast to 8-9 percent, the government said.

But gross domestic product (GDP) growth is expected to slow to 3-5 percent in 2005 due to the exceptionally high base this year and moderation in global electronics demand, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) said.

"The moderation of growth in 2005 is in line with the expected deceleration of the world economy and global electronics industry," Friedrich Wu, director of the MTI's economic division, told a media conference.

Growth in the second half is likely to come in at 6-8 percent after expanding 10 percent year-on-year, Wu said.

August 9, Germans take to the streets to protest against Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's economic reforms, which are expected to lower the level of welfare available to people from the former East Germany.



Russia Pumps up Oil Tax

East Asia's Economic Expansion Continues

London, August 8 (Reuters) – Oil prices hit their highest level in at least 21 years on Wednesday after bailiffs ordered beleaguered Russian oil giant Yukos to stop sales. The Russian government has raised oil export tax by 70 percent in order to make up for the losses.

Prices jumped after a company source said Russian bailiffs told Yukos' four production units, which together pump 1.7 million barrels a day of oil, to halt sales of property – including oil. A halt to sales would hasten the collapse of the company, which pumps around 20 percent of the Russian crude supply. Russia is the world's second biggest oil exporter behind Saudi Arabia after five years of rapid production growth.

London's Brent crude rose 91 cents a barrel to \$38.90 a barrel, its highest level since October 1990, ahead of the first Gulf War. If the Yukos turmoil prevents Russian production from meeting forecasts for further growth, the global oil supply system will be even more pressed to meet rising demand, analysts say.

Analyst's Take:

Russia's move in raising oil export tax is meant to increase government income. During the past three years, oil exports have provided around 20 percent of Russian GDP, and international oil prices in the first half this year remained at a very high level.

In an unstable economic situation in the Middle East, and when many other countries in the world want to shake off the dependence on the Middle East oil supply, Russia aimed at enhancing its state power by making full use of its oil resources, because petroleum has been widely seen as a symbol of a nation's international competitiveness.

On the other hand, the 70 percent jump in export tax will in return harm profits for domestic oil corporations, and weaken their motivation and competitiveness in the international oil market.

– Tong Lixia, researcher from the International Market Research Office of the Ministry of Commerce

Manila July 29 (ADB.org) – East Asia's economic growth is continuing despite the sharp rise in world oil prices, according to the Asian Development Bank (ADB)'s semiannual economic monitor report released today.

The report produced by ADB's Regional Economic Monitoring Unit (REMU), cites three near-term risks that could dim the currently bright regional outlook: continued high oil prices, larger-than-expected increases in US interest rates, and a hard landing for the Chinese economy.

The report also cites healthier industrialized economies especially in the US and Japan, buoyant intra-regional trade, and continued strength in domestic demand around the region as reasons for a projected 7.3% GDP growth in East Asia for 2004, above the 6.6% level forecast in the December last year.

"This upswing in growth, which began last year, will reach its peak

this year, close to its post-crisis high of 7.5% in 2000, and moderate somewhat in 2005," says Pradumna B. Rana, REMU Director. As economic growth in the major industrial countries and China slows to more sustainable levels, East Asia's growth is expected to moderate somewhat next year to a still robust 6.5%.

East Asia's strong first half economic expansion was driven by a combination of a rapid increase in exports and continued strength in domestic demand. However, this robust growth, along with increases in world prices for oil and other commodities, has led to a gradual increase in inflation throughout the region.

Analyst's Take:

China has acted as a key trading station in Asia from the middle 1990s, an export target country for surrounding nations and also for the US and Europe. Therefore, whether China's

economy is overheated, and whether the Chinese government will adopt cooling-down policies will influence countries such as Japan and South Korea. So China's soft-landing economic policy this year will inevitably slow down their development.

In terms of the record high oil price currently, Asia as well as China will certainly be affected more or less, but not too seriously. There are generally two kinds of oil price fluctuation. One is a price jump which usually happens only after major events such as the Gulf War. The record shows that Asian economies always encounter a big hit after such events. The other is speculative fluctuation such as this time with the Russian oil giant Yukos facing bankruptcy.

– Zhou Xiaobing, researcher from the Institute of Asia and Pacific Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Science

Workers Killed in Nuclear Accident

Tokyo, August 9 (New York Times) – Superheated steam erupted from the ceiling of a nuclear power plant north of Kyoto on Monday, killing four workers and severely burning five others. It was Japan's worst nuclear accident. "Radioactive materials weren't contained in the steam that leaked out," an official for the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency said at a news conference here.

A government plan calls for building 11 more nuclear plants and raising the percentage of the nation's power supplied by nuclear energy to nearly 40 percent by 2010. But these plans have stalled as the public has become increasingly wary of nuclear power. Many towns have held referendums, voting against building nuclear plants.

Company officials said the accident took place in the turbine building of the No. 3 nuclear reactor in Mihama, which was scheduled to be closed Saturday for routine maintenance. About 200 workers were in the building at 3:30 pm, when a two-foot-wide hole burst in a steel pipe

that carried steam, pressurized and heated to as much as 400 degrees.

With the accident occurring on the 59th anniversary of the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki, political and industry leaders were quick on Monday to assure the public that a thorough investigation would take place. However, the accident could further hurt popular trust in nuclear power, because these are the first deaths from an accident in a nuclear power plant in operation.

Local Report:

The leaking accident on Monday at the Japanese nuclear power station has raised questions about the national nuclear-centered energy strategy and the maintenance of ageing facilities.

Japan has always been longing for a multiple energy development strategy in order to alleviate industrial dependence on oil imports because of its limited land resources, and has largely reduced the proportion from 77 percent to 50 through modern nuclear power technology.

However, its new energy plan cen-

tered on nuclear power has encountered successive frustrations such as the exposure of hidden dangers at many Japanese nuclear power stations.

Japan relies on 52 nuclear power plants to generate almost one-third of the nation's electricity, and will set up 20 new ones in the near future. Though a serious accident may happen again, it will be hard for the country to change its nuclear development program.

– China Youth Daily, August 9, Beijing



Science Reveals Secrets of Ancient Corpse

By Chen Si

Xin Zhui is looking good for her age, considering she is 2,000 years old. Her remarkably well-preserved body, retrieved over 30 years ago from inside a Han dynasty tomb in Mawangdui, Hunan Province, has been put through a battery of scientific tests for a few years, the intriguing results of which were made public last Saturday.

The wife of a high minister in the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC -25 AD), Xin Zhui's body was carefully preserved and sealed in the tomb after she died in 186 BC around the age of 50.

Conditions inside the tomb prevented her remains from decomposing and her corpse was one of the most intact ancient bodies ever found. In the years that have passed since she re-

turned to the land of the living in 1972, the body has shown remarkably little change.

"Xin Zhui's corpse is amazingly well protected. Her skin still shows elasticity, her joints can move and her remaining cartilage is easily visible to the naked eye.

X-rays have shown her skeletal structure is better than that of an average, living 60-year old woman," Luo Xuegang, leader of the examination team, said during an international symposium held last Saturday to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the exploration of the Mawangdui tomb.

"We found a few undeveloped bacteria in the corpse's liver, but they were not able to grow and consume the body because there was insufficient oxygen," Luo told *Beijing Today*

Tuesday. "Nobody knows how those ancient people developed such amazing antiseptic techniques."

That is the good news. The bad news is that modern techniques have not yet reached Han-era levels, meaning the body is in danger of severe desiccation and decomposition.

A major problem is "how to prevent the loss of protein, a crucial component of all cells," Luo said. "If the protein goes, all that will be left will be the skeleton and some muscle fibers, making it a dry corpse – a mummy."

His team is using a rigorous, complicated embalming method to stave off decomposition, but success is not definite.

"This is just the first step of our plan. We need more time to conduct further studies," Luo noted.



Return of the living dead: the 2,000-year-old body still has pliant flesh and flexible joints.

Students Challenged to Live 15 Days on 50 Yuan

By Ruan Ying

Public debate has raged for years on the topic of whether China's millions of only children are spoiled and soft, and similar doubts also extend to university students around the country. One university in Zhejiang Province has addressed the issue by creating a program intended to put select students straight into the real world – even painfully so – by having them experience hard work and financial struggles.

Zhejiang Normal University launched the fifth session of its unusual "Testing Viability" training on July 31 in the capital. Earlier versions sent students to live leanly in the cities of Xiamen, Shenzhen, Qingdao and Shanghai.

The 30 participants all had to pass rigorous written exams and interviews to have the privilege of receiving only 50 yuan to cover 15 days of life in this city.

The idea of the program is to force the students to all find jobs, as organizers figured that the rock bottom of possible daily expenses was 12 yuan, meaning the cash would run out well before the 15 day limit. Students unable to find some kind of work have to accept failure and return to campus. So far, none of the 30 brave souls have had to turn back.

Zhou Yunyun purchased 6 yuan of food on the train ride to Beijing, only later realizing that gave her less initial mon-



"I've never done this kind of work before and I'm hoping this will be the last and only time" – Ye Zhaoyun

ey than her classmates. Luckily, she managed to quickly find a job as a waitress at a local restaurant.

Tutoring brings in a relatively pain-free 120 a day for Zhang Yiwei, while classmate Ye Zhaoyun earns his money the hard way as a water delivery boy, carrying more than 200 large bottles a day. "I've never done this kind of work before and I'm hoping this will be the last and only time," the thin young man admitted to *Beijing Today*.

All the students said they made it through the hard days by working together and relying on each other. They also noted that the experience gave them a much clearer picture of the enormous gaps between different people in society and the limitations of learning just from books.

"We have also learned to thank people who help us, and we will donate the money we earn in Beijing to wherever it is most needed," one student said.

"They decided to take part in this program under influence from former participants and with a dream of challenging themselves," noted Gu Lina, the students' teacher.

It is an eye-opening, altruistic turn that could reap rewards, as many domestic companies have expressed interest in recruiting participants following wide press coverage of the program.



Chengdu, consider yourself dished!

Flash Mob Pops Up in Chengdu

By Zhou Ying

Pedestrians were puzzled as a mob of more than 200 teenagers materialized out of thin air in Chengdu, Sichuan Province on Saturday afternoon, made the same hand gestures, simultaneously shouted a cryptic slogan and then dispersed as fast as they appeared.

"At 2:55 pm on Saturday, there were groups of young people in twos and threes loitering around

Chunxi Road. I couldn't figure out what they were all doing there," one witness told the Chengdu-based *Tianfu Morning Paper* that day.

Suddenly a whistle blew and the young people, all wearing red T-shirts bearing the name of local website Chengdu Online, gathered together. "They began to clap their hands in rhythm. When a second whistle blew, they made hand gestures that popularly mean 'I look

down on you' and then shouted 'I don't like it!' in unison," he said. Within minutes, the mob completely dispersed, as the teenagers doffed or covered their T-shirts and disappeared into the crowd on the street.

A *Tianfu Morning Paper* reporter grabbed one girl from the group for questions, but she denied participation.

On condition of anonymity, a participant explained the activity

was organized over the Internet and that everyone involved had sworn not to talk to the media.

"We just saw it as a way to blow off some steam," he said, adding that there were no ulterior motives to the organized event.

Such "flash mobs" have become somewhat regular phenomena in the US, the UK and other countries, sometimes as means of protest, but mostly just as recreation, at least according to flashmob.com.



Plunging Dollar Cuts Costs in Capital

By Dong Nan

Living in Beijing is getting less expensive, the Economist Intelligence Unit showed in its latest Worldwide Cost of Living survey released this month. The city fell to 46th place on that list, down dramatically from its 27th place position six months ago.

The major reason cited for the drop, echoed in a few other Chinese metropolises, is a lack of inflation in China along with the pegging of the renminbi to the slipping US dollar. Shanghai dropped 13 places to 49th, Guangzhou went from 43rd to 68th, Shenzhen hit 79th, down from 63rd and Xiamen dropped seven spots to 100th.

Similar pegging of the Hong Kong dollar to the US dollar has allowed that city, named one of the five most expensive in the world every year since 1997, to drop out of the top ten and settle at 12th place.

The bi-annual survey compares the cost of a representative basket of goods and services

in dollar terms from over 130 cities worldwide to provide guidance for the calculation of executive allowances, and uses New York as a base index for comparison.

While pushing down Asian results, the weakness of the dollar has caused European cities to rise in the rankings and dominate the top end of the table. Only five of the 25 most costly cities on this latest list are located outside Europe.

The slide of US cities down the rankings has continued apace, with only New York (27th) remaining in the top 30 and just five other cities occupying places in the top 50.

According to the Economist Intelligence Unit, there are two major reasons why a city's cost of living index changes over time: exchange rate movement and price movement. Since a common currency is required in making a comparative calculation, all local prices are converted into dollars, which emphasizes the role of currency movement.



Surgeons Improve Hairy Rocker's Hearing

By Zhou Ying

Rock singer Yu Zhenhuan's hearing had been suffering – not from high-decibel damage, but from hair getting in the way in his ear canal. The world's hairiest man can look forward to getting more out of his music now that the interfering hair was removed and his ears were surgically reshaped in a Shanghai hospital last Friday.

Doctors said before the operation that Yu had been afflicted with constant earaches, nausea and significant hearing loss. "Sometimes, when I stand on the stage, I just cannot hear voices from the audience," he told the *Shanghai Evening Post* before his surgery at Shanghai's Ninth People's Hospital.

Chen Jin'an, head of the hospital's plastic surgery department, said the high-power microscope-assisted procedure was the first of its kind in the world.

Yu has a condition called atavism and his body, except the palms of his hands and the soles of his feet, is covered with an average of 41 hairs per square centimeter. He was recognized as the world's hairiest man by the Guinness Book of World Records in 2002.

"I regard my hair as something that makes me very distinct. If it all disappeared, I would lose my confidence," he said, adding he had never considered hair-removal surgery. Yu said he and his girlfriend were planning on getting married next year.

Curtain Falls on APEC Youth Festival

By Zhou Ying

The third APEC (Asian and Pacific Economic Cooperation) Youth Festival came to a close Wednesday afternoon at Chinese Ethnic Culture Park. Li Xueyong, vice minister of science and technology, Beijing Vice Mayor Fan Boyuan and other senior officials from related departments attended the closing ceremony.

A wide range of activities, including student and teacher forums and exhibitions, were run during the event.

In his speech at the closing ceremony, Li Xueyong said that the festival represented a great contribution to enhancing friendship and communication between youth in APEC member economies and expressed hopes younger generations would continue exploring the mysteries of science and technology in order to make a better world.

The festival ended when local girl Zhan Bao, on behalf of the 1,200 delegates from 14 member economies that took

part, read a declaration encouraging youth to get involved in science and work together for the future.

"We believe that guided by science, youth in the APEC region can join hands and explore the world of science and start a new age, when science, technology, environmental protection and humanity will come together and contribute to peace and development in the 21st century," Zhan, a student at Beijing's Fourth High School, declared.

Afterwards, she told *Beijing Today* that the greatest achievement of the festival was its spirit of solidarity. "I am sad that it is time to part," Zhan said.

A South Korean delegate said the highlight of the event for him was when the whole group went to the Great Wall. "It is greater than I ever imagined," he gushed.

Young Natalie Midema from New Zealand told *Beijing Today* that she was very impressed with Beijing and hoped to come back again.

By Chen Si

Students were up in arms last week after the Department of Education of Guangdong Province released a regulation forbidding them from renting houses outside campus without permission. A similar regulation was released by the Ministry of Education this June, requiring that students lodging outside should move back to school grounds within a given time limit, and that schools should conduct an investigation into students lodging outside.

Guangdong's regulation said that for those who really have special reasons to lodge outside, they should sign an agreement with their parents and the university, promising that the school has no responsibility for anything that happens to them while off campus.

Most students oppose the regulation, believing it limits their privacy and freedom. But teachers appear to approve of it, saying it can ensure the security of students. Just now, however, during the summer vacation, many estate agencies are enjoying the peak period of their business. Ms. Wu, a clerk from an agency near Renmin University, said their houses were all rented out. The rental price is about 300 yuan per month for each bed, and about 2000 yuan per month for each two-bedroom

happened, such as theft. The conditions of the houses outside school differ widely, which increases security problems. Now that we have issued the policy, we will insist on it anyway, even though some students may feel they are being excessively supervised. If students try to ignore the regulation, they will risk expulsion. Though some universities do regular inspections of students' dorms, some students still have countermeasures. Once they hear the school will inspect their dorms, they come back at once. To deal with such problems, we plan to arrange a counselor in every dorm building with the duty to supervise students and live with them all day.

Dai Ying, a student from Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou

The gatekeepers in our dorm building have been keeping an eye on us for several years. They found a girl stay in a boy's dorm last year, and gave her a serious punishment. The girl stayed in the boy's dorm late that night, and when she returned to her dorm at 11 pm, the gate was locked so she had to stay in the boy's dorm. Though it was the girl's fault, we cannot deny that our dorm system does have defects.

It is funny if people think we lodge outside just for love. Most students I know lodging off campus are of the same sex. Actually, the uni-

versity cannot prevent sexual behavior by forbidding students lodging off campus. My roommate who sleeps above me once had her boyfriend sleeping with her in her bed. You can imagine what I felt at that time. I do not want to know others' private matters. If this phenomenon cannot be controlled, don't you think it is better to lodge outside?

Hao Maishou, sociologist from Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences

It is better for students to decide where to lodge by themselves. It is the right for students to lodge in school,

not the obligation. Of course, there are some problems about safety when lodging outside, but there are while lodging on campus as well. We hear a lot about stealing inside universities. The method to deal with the problem is not to forbid the students, but to consult with them and reach solutions together. Why can't we use the method of consulting?

Yu Jingying, director of the logistics group of Renmin University

The regulation is not improper. The university has the right to establish rules according to its management needs, including forbidding students from lodging outside in order to ensure their safety. Students who lodge outside complain about the power being switched off on campus at a fixed time every day, but we have our reasons to cut electricity. Many accidents have happened because of the incorrect use of electricity. To limit the use of electricity is the best way to avoid such accidents. So this is just an excuse. The regulations are all in the interests of students.

Liu Ming, a mother of an undergraduate student

My son once lodged outside for two months, and I allowed him to. He said he would like to get prepared for his exams, but his dorm was too noisy and inconvenient. I think if he has enough reasons, I won't oppose it. He worked hard, and got good marks in his exams. However, if I had a daughter, I would not agree, as I would be worried about her security.

Rachel Morris, American, a private school teacher

Actually, most university students in my district rent flats off campus. We do not think it is wrong to do so. It is just our right. If something happens in my flat, of course it has nothing to do with the university. Some lovers also rent flats together, but nobody condemns them or inspects them. It is just their privacy. I cannot understand this regulation.



The west gate of Beijing University

Beijing University Reject Cries Foul

By Zhou Ying

Allegations of improper admissions practices at Beijing University's law school lodged in an article posted by a law teacher have raised eyebrows around the country and sparked widespread public debate about the role of tutors in graduate school admissions.

Gan Dehuai, a law instructor at Hehai University in Jiangsu Province, posted his controversial article on the Internet on July 9. In the article, he angrily denounces the circumstances of his rejection from Beijing University's law school while two seemingly less qualified candidates got in.

With the goal of pursuing a PhD in law at Beijing University, Gan took the preliminary national entrance exam for advanced degree programs in March and got an excellent result. However, one month later, he failed to pass the final exam.

Gan says that Beijing University law professor Zhu Suli instead gave the coveted two open spots in the university's law school to two people he had personally tutored and who had not scored nearly as highly in the preliminary exam.

"Their scores on the first exam were lower than the basic requirements," Gan wrote. "I suspect that Zhu gave unprincipled favor to one of the students because he had studied at Beijing University."

On July 12, Zhu Suli published his own letter in response, justifying his decisions as correct. "According to our regulations, when average scores on the preliminary exam are low, we can drop the minimum score for taking the final exam. We did so in this case, and therefore the two students were qualified to take part in that test."

He claims that he only knew one of the successful applicants and explains that in the final, examiners decided Gan did not have adequate research abilities, despite his excellent test scores, to pass. "If we only accepted people with the highest test results, why would we also conduct interviews?" Zhu argued.

Some people have expressed anger towards Professor Zhu, saying that if the score doesn't reflect understanding of the subject properly, the tutors should be blamed. Others have insisted that the examination cannot give the overall picture.

The allegations echo the advice in a book on the state of China's PhD program admission system written by Renmin University professor Gu Haibin. Gu said immediate change was needed, as tutors held complete and improper control over candidates' destinies.

Zhu Siran, a journalist from CCTV

I think Gan's experience certainly reflects unfairness in the process of choosing candidates for entry to advanced degree programs. It is really very common for students already studying at the target universities to get the priority in selection for further study courses.

As far as I know, students can pass the entrance exam for advanced degree programs, no matter how low their scores are, and this seems wrong. The related departments should weaken the role of tutors in graduate school admissions, in order to avoid favoritism. However, this won't be easy.

Li Shuming, a journalist from Beijing News

I think there are some doubtful points in Professor Zhu's letter in response.

Firstly, Professor Zhu explained that the reason why Gan failed to pass was that he did not do so well in the final exam. That would be reasonable if that was the case. However, in Gan's article, Gan questions why Beijing University's law school did not inform him of the timing of the final exam until he ended up calling them. "I was sure that if I didn't call them, I would miss the exam," he wrote. I guess they just did not want to choose him from the very beginning.

Secondly, why not make it public that they dropped the minimum score for taking the final exam? I really believe what Zhu said was true, but I just

know more about the students' background, and their interview is much more important.

Xu Zhihong, principal of Beijing University

Actually, we are trying to weaken the role of written examinations in the process of selecting candidates, and we plan to phase it out gradually.

From our experience, I think we should attach more importance to the all-round quality of the candidates. The result of the written examination only accounts for 40 percent of the total score, because it can only reflect the sum of the students' knowledge. We should pay more attention to candidates' personal ability, I mean the ability to make full use of that knowledge.

Ralph Jennings, an American teacher in Beijing Broadcasting Institute

Universities in the USA form committees to select PhD students. They select based on research accomplishments done during MA/MS studies and on published works. No matter whether you give the committee a large gift or a small gift, you can't get in unless your academic record is up to snuff.

China's tests have merit in making the first cut. If you fail, for example, you clearly wouldn't qualify for higher study. But the testing system alone can't decide someone's promise in studying for a higher degree. Only review of previous works, interviews and reference checks can determine whether a candidate

can think independently, research thoroughly and contribute to the public knowledge of a deep topic.

Tony Conway, Director of Cambridge Education Group, China Office

I believe that the professor mentioned in the article is right. Essentially PhDs and DPhils are projects involving three or more years of research in a field selected by the candidate and approved by his or her supervisor. Examinations are not particularly useful in helping to select candidates for these degrees. Doctoral candidates normally have a proven track record in research demonstrated by possession of a master's degree done on a research rather than a taught basis. In addition such candidates normally possess a good honours degree at bachelor's level.

It is not at all unusual for candidates to be known by department heads since many will have already completed research within that department. And candidate referrals between universities are also not uncommon as subject specialists in different universities may know each other professionally through published work, through academic conferences or by reputation.

When a candidate from overseas applies to a university in the UK to embark on a doctoral thesis, he or she must be able to demonstrate existing research skills through the pathway described above, must also be able to provide genuine references from academics who know their work, and must provide a detailed proposal outlining their proposed field of research. Where possible, an interview is also desirable. The universities to which they apply will have been selected by them for their established expertise and reputation for research in the candidate's chosen field.

Get Back on Campus



Adverts for renting houses can be seen all over campus Photo by Photocome

house. Is lodging off campus really full of danger? Should universities give the students more freedom? Opinions follow:

Guo Dandan, a student from Beijing Institute of Technology, lodging off campus

We are already adults, and we have the right to decide where to lodge. This regulation is unfair. There are eight girls in my dorm. The room is always noisy, and I cannot concentrate on my studies. Besides, we are from different places; our customs are different. I like going to bed early, while they like staying up and chatting till late. This always disturbs my life, so I have had to lodge outside. Now my room is more convenient than before, and I have more free time.

Some of my classmates are preparing for postgraduate qualifying examinations and study late every night. But our university cuts the power at 10:30 pm, so they have to rent houses outside. I believe if they can study together and encourage each other, it is really a good thing. As far as I know, 70 percent of my classmates are willing to rent a house outside campus.

Qi Xiaoping, a teacher from Sun Yat-Sen University in Guangzhou

The university has a responsibility for the security of students. The security of lodging concerns the normal teaching and living order, and the stability of the school. The regulation plays a role in the management of university, but it is not enough. We should make students willing to live at school. We should improve the management of lodging to create better living and studying conditions to attract them to stay on campus. We also should enhance their awareness of security.

Mr. Zhang, member of the Department of Education of Guangdong Province

The reason behind the regulation is that there are a lot of hidden troubles in renting houses outside campus. Many bad things have



Zhu Suli

want to know who made this decision and what was the final criterion? All of these should not be secrets. Otherwise, how can it be fair?

Thirdly, one tutor failed to attend Gan's interview. According to Zhu, the other two teachers present, one of whom was himself, decided that Gan had failed. "The minority is subordinate to the majority. Therefore although the other teacher rejected our decision, he still cannot change the results," Zhu said. However, I just wonder whether the final interview should go ahead if one tutor is absent.

Dr. Li Shiling, assistant director of China Asset Management company

I think the current exam system is determined by Chinese national conditions. Compared with our large population, the educational resources are really insufficient. The fact is that thousands of candidates will compete for just two or three places in advanced degree programs. So exams are the only way to select people.

In America, not so many people study for a doctorate, because it will not necessarily improve their job opportunities. Indeed, many students regard further study as a way of postponing the difficulties of finding a job.

Gu Guanqun, principal of Southeast University

I think the most important quality for a doctoral student is the ability to be innovative. It is unreasonable to select candidates merely based on the exam. In western countries, they do not need to recruit students through examination. The tutors can decide whether to choose students, depending on their background, research interests, or the reference of other tutors. I think the western model is more reasonable. To



By James Liu

With fewer than 30 South China tigers remaining in the wild and just 60 in captivity, something needs to be done if they are to avoid extinction. But a radical plan to boost the tigers' numbers has run into controversy, both in China and abroad.

Animal enthusiast Quan Li set up the Save China's Tigers organization in order to do something about the problem. She launched a rewilding campaign for tigers born in captivity in August 2000, in partnership with the British Charity Commission in London. The campaign, also sponsored by the Wildlife Research and Development Center of the State Forestry Administration, aimed to bring South China tigers to South Africa to receive rewilding training and then return them to nature in some selected regions in China. The first two cubs were sent to South Africa last September and Quan says they're already making great progress. She hopes the tigers can return to their motherland in 2008 in time for the Olympic Games in Beijing.

Zoologists and academics in China and abroad have complained that the plan is ill thought out, unscientific and that it could even carry great risks for local wildlife, both in South Africa and back in China.

But Quan is determined. "The South China tiger is the most endangered tiger subspecies in the world. It is also a direct descendent of the tigers that roamed China two million years ago. If we do not act now, they are likely to become extinct."

Should tigers play with lions?

Ever since Quan started to carry out her plan, there have been murmurs of unease from academe and government bodies such as IUCN, The World Conservation Union. The Cat Specialist Group (Cat SG) of IUCN warned Quan that a programme to prepare South China tigers for reintroduction to the wild would be best carried out in their natural habitat in China. "Experience with reintroduction of many species has shown that there are considerable risks of failure, and familiarity with habitat and prey will be an important factor in ensuring the restoration of the tiger. To go to the considerable expense and risk of failure by bringing the animals into a totally different environment and habituating them to different prey is highly questionable," said the open letter issued by Cat SG.

This opinion appears to be supported by most Chinese animal experts. Doctor Xie Yan from the Institute of Zoology, China Academy of Sciences told *Beijing Today* that there is a high risk of the tiger cubs being infected with local viruses in Africa. "In that case, when the animals are brought back, they will transfer the virus or disease to the original tigers which are vulnerable to the intrusion of outside bacteria," said Xie.

But Quan points to a successful rewilding program for Bengal tigers in South Africa. According to an agreement signed between the Wildlife Research and Development Center and Quan's charity, they will adapt the methods of training Bengal tigers for the South China tigers. Quan's team in South Africa is also led by some top people, including Mr. Petri Viljoen, a highly respected scientist who used to work for the South African government in Kruger National Park,

In or Out of Africa?

and Dr. Jeremy Anderson, who was the first Director of Pilansburg National Park and oversaw the transformation of Pilansburg from farmland back to a habitat for wildlife. "We cannot achieve the goal if we try to do it in China," says Quan, "we don't have the expertise."

An African home?

Another area of debate is about how the tigers will fare once they return home, having become accustomed to the environment of Africa. "Tigers live in forests in relatively temperate zones. The difference between the African torrid zone and their original weather environment will have a negative effect on them," Zhang Li, an expert with the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) pointed out to *China Youth Daily* on July 28.

Besides the consideration for the tigers, experts are also worried about the African ecosystem with the introduction of Chinese tigers. "If the tigers were released according to the plans into a 300 square kilometer area in the Free State in South Africa, this would effectively make tigers free-ranging and in direct competition with the region's own indigenous animals. We are opposed to this plan. Not only do we believe it to be against the Biodiversity Bill, but it is also in flagrant opposition to IUCN principles for the release of exotic organisms. Furthermore, there may be serious health risks to the introduction of tigers, particularly with regard to host/parasite dynamics. For example, we can't predict what African FIV, which is harmless in indigenous African cats, will do in Chinese tigers. The reverse might apply to an exotic parasite introduced from the tigers into an endemic African host species," Cat SG complained.

At present, two Chinese tigers, Guotai and Xiwang, are living in a five square kilometer region rented from the National Zoo of South Africa. According to the schedule, they will eventually have a 300 square kilometer zone called Makopani north of the capital. But Quan has run into trouble with her African partners, the Varty brothers, who she accuses of stealing money from the fund to buy land for the project. This is still being dealt

with in the South African legal system. However, Quan does now have control of the 300 square kilometers of land that she and her husband set out to acquire for the Chinese Tiger rewilding project. "We are waiting for the South African Free State Environmental department to grant us a permit for the Chinese Tiger project. Perhaps their answer will come within a week," Quan told *Beijing Today* on Wednesday.

Quan says the two Chinese tigers have performed wonderfully and made their first kills of two bush bucks in July. "Compared to their first arrival in the rewilding center, when they refused to come off the concrete floor and refused to eat any other food except beef, they have come a long way," Quan told *Beijing Today*.

Profit driven?

At a press conference in the South African embassy in Beijing on December 5, Quan and her team of experts released their research report on 10 candidate sites in four provinces as potential future habitats for the returning tigers. The survey emphasized the tourism potential of the selected areas.

Zixi County in east China's Jiangxi Province and Liuyang City in Hunan Province have been proposed for approval by the State Forestry Administration.



Quan Li

Youth Daily.

Quan admitted to *Beijing Today* that the choice of potential habitats was based on both an ecological and economic point of view. Next Monday, Quan will return to Beijing to support a bid to make Chinese Tigers the mascot for the 2008 Beijing Olympic games.

Quan gives the Wildlife Research and Development Center of the State Forestry Administration US\$100,000 each year. In return, the Wildlife Research and Development Center will provide 5 to 10 Tiger cubs till 2007 for rewilding. Meanwhile, though Xie Yan admits that Quan's efforts are well intended, she is concerned about the implications for the tigers of profit motives in the project.

Whatever the skepticism, Quan remains defiant. She attributes the criticism of her scheme to "political motivation, rather than scientific concern." She also regards the experts who criticized her in the *China Youth Daily* article as desktop academics. "If I succeed, as a new comer, in rewilding the Chinese tigers, where does that leave them, the authorities?"

Rancid River Defies Clean-up Effort

By Wang Fang

A massive cleaning program began on China's seriously polluted Huaihe River in 1994, with an investment of more than 60 billion yuan over the past 10 years. According to the experts' initial forecasts, this endeavour would relieve environmental degradation and restrain further pollution in the river valley. Ten years on, nothing could be further from the case. A recent investigation has found that little real progress has been made, and pollution is still getting worse.

The state of Huaihe River

Huaihe River is the third largest river in China. It supplies water for one sixth of the country's 1.3 billion population. It runs through Henan, Shandong, Jiangsu and Anhui Provinces and the river valley is one of the most densely populated areas of China, an old agriculture base and an emerging industrial belt. Millions of tons of industrial waste and urban sewage have been poured into the river for decades.

Xie Zhenhua, director of the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), noted that GDP in the Huaihe River valley grew by 134 percent from 1996 to 2003. He also said that the chemical oxygen demand (COD) discharge in the river dropped by 50 percent during that time. However, this has not changed the fundamental problem. The river is still filthy.

According to the investigation report released by SEPA on June 21, water from the Huaihe's tributaries, which carry 60 percent of total water resources of the river, is too polluted to supply even industrial production and irrigation, let alone drinking.

Wang Changlin, 66 years old, has been living by the Huaihe River all his life as a fisherman. For him, it has become normal to see dead fish floating in the river. He said as long as there were polluted water tides coming from the upper reaches, there would be a lot of dead fish downriver. The fish try to swim to the lower reaches to escape the polluted water. About 10 times a year, Wang sees large groups of fish driven by the polluted water tides, many of them already dead. He caught about 350 kilograms fish, mainly dead, from the last tide; he normally catches only a few kilograms. When asked how he deals with such a large amount of fish, he said, "I sell them to the people living in the city because they do not know how polluted the river is and we tell them the fish were alive when we caught them."

Besides selling dead fish in the market, local people dry them and sell them to the poultry farm. "The chicken like the fish powder," says Wang. He said many residents were doing this.

Wang said even though he did not like to see the dead fish floating in the river, he could not resist the habit of throwing rubbish into the river himself. It seems many residents living along the river have allowed a vicious cycle to develop.

Sulfuric acid

The place where Wang lives is a small island surrounded by water. Huge dust and refuse heaps accumulate, giving off an overpowering reek, but as Wang says, river floodwater can usually be relied upon to flush a lot of it down to somewhere else in the valley. "Whenever the Huaihe River floods, the dust heaps will be wiped away by the water," he says. However, the general disregard for the environment has led to locals having to journey to other villages to get their drinking water.

In China, surface water is divided into five classes and people are advised to steer clear of classes III to V. The report from the Water Resource Protection Bureau of Huaihe Valley Committee in 2003 said that two thirds of Huaihe River water was classified as class III and below. Staff in the bureau also said that some of the most polluted water was literally off the scale. "The state does not have a standard for the most hazardous degree mentioned in the report," said one staff member.

In the contamination outlet at Bayi Chemical Factory, the polluted water looks dark brown like soy sauce. The director of the Flood Draining Station near the fac-



All the crabs are dead

tory said, "The concrete in the water pool has been eroded, so there must be a lot of sulfuric acid in the water. This could affect the dam on the Huaihe River. If the corrugated steel bars in the dam wear away, the dam will collapse. The factory carried out anti-erosion work in 2002, but this was soon worn away."

Since the beginning of this year, the degree of pollution in the region has been worsening. At 13 of the 19 monitoring spots along the river, the level of pollution has been found to exceed the supposed maximum. The reason is largely due to the lack of a sufficient water treatment plants. In 2001, the project of building up a water treatment plant in Fengtai County was approved by Huainan Government. But the project has not yet made it off the drawing board. Liu Dongfu, the assigned director of the plant said, "We are afraid to begin the construction work because if there is no continuous investment to support it, we will be sucked into a terrible situation."

Liu needs 160 million yuan to build the plant. But Fengtai Government only has an annual budget of 100 million a year to run everything. Therefore, the project cannot rely on the government's support. In April 2003, Liu was told that the project would be funded by national bonds, but the funds have still not been made available.

However, the lack of investment to build water treatment plants is not a rare problem. In the report by SEPA, 29 other cities in Anhui Province have failed to build water treatment plants. 82.8% of the total number of treatment plants in the whole region are stuck at the planning stage.

Concern from the government

"It's unfair to say the clean-up program has been a failure, but it has achieved less than we expected. Pollution in the tributaries is still severe, if not worse than before," said Pan Yue, SEPA's vice-director.

Pan recently led a 15-day inspection tour to the area, covering 165 chemical, brewery, pharmaceutical and paper-making plants, and 30 urban water treatment plants in the four provinces along the river.

He was disappointed to see that 31.5 percent of industrial polluters discharge more than the maximum permitted, 56.7 percent of water treatment plants are out of service, and the water quality of half the branch rivers falls short of target standards set in 2001.

Pan said four things led to this situation.

He first blamed local officials who ignore environmental capacity to accommodate pollution when making economic development plans. "They approved heavy polluting projects only to raise the GDP figure."

The failure was also attributed to the shortage of funds. Only 33 percent of the 60-billion-yuan investment had been realized by mid-2004.

Thirdly, heavy polluting industries are still the industrial pillars of the Huaihe River Valley. The paper-making, chemical, beverage, textile and food industry have discharged 78.4 percent of the river's total COD.

In addition to the industrial pollution, agricultural pollution is soaring. 70% of fertilizers and pesticides used by farmers in the river valley are washed into the river.

Pan demanded local governments adjust the industrial structure, arrange agricultural and industrial production based on the river's capacity, and push forward an emissions licensing system. He also called for new laws and regulations to give SEPA more power to punish polluters. At the moment, small fines are SEPA's principal weapon.

By Jessie Jiang

Anyone who has bought or sold a house in China recently knows his name. Millions of Chinese have read his “*204 Provisions*”, the unofficial Bible of house-purchasing in China. He’s equally well-known to unscrupulous house-sellers, but for them he is a bane rather than a guardian.

Lawyer Qin Bing became famous after publishing his “*204 Provisions for House-purchase Contracts*”, a list of legal guarantees that housebuyers ought to be able to demand. At a time when China still has a long way to go before it is fully ruled by law, Qin’s dreams have inspired people all over the country.

Dream one: live with dignity

Born in Shandong province, Qin Bing has in his blood a spirit of defiance typical of this region. Shandong has been the site of numerous rebellions over the centuries and was the setting for the famous novel *Outlaws of the Marsh* by Shi Nai’an. One of Qin’s role models was his grandfather who left college during the Japanese invasion and went home to organize guerrilla units. Seven times his brigade was decimated, but each time he managed to rebuild it again. “When I think of him, I can’t help but feel admiration. Who could have imagined a young student without any military background being able to fight with such perseverance? Take today’s so-called intelligentsia, how many would be able to do that if caught in the same situation?”

The warrior in the grandfather was soon revived in the boy. When Qin was in primary school, he belonged to a group whose parents had all migrated from other cities, so he and his pals were frequently bullied and robbed by the rest of the pupils. One day, however, Qin decided that if he and his friends were organized they would be able to fight back. Qin forged an alliance with another boy and jointly fought back against one bully until they’d reduced him to tears. The fruit of this early “uprising” was so sweet that when Qin grew up to find that there were many bullies and thieves in the property market, he was ready to stand up again.

“I could never imagine my life being ordinary, submissive or mediocre. That would be unbearable,” says Qin. “Even in my worst days, I always sought to live with dignity, honesty and high morale.”

1993 brought a rude shock however. Qin was making a fortune in a computer business in Shandong when a business partner deceived him into borrowing a sum of 260,000 yuan from the bank. With scarce knowledge of the relevant laws and regulations, Qin did so casually, only to find himself being sued by the bank and deprived of his hard-won fortune. Shocked and puzzled, Qin went to Beijing to appeal in 1995. He was then about 26, and had no idea how dramatically this decision would change his entire life.

Dream two: fight for justice

When Qin arrived in Beijing, his only purpose was to be a “successful appellant”. When he asked where he could go to find justice, someone told him, “Go to *Ren Da* (the people’s congress).” By a mistake of hearing, Qin went to another *Ren Da* (Renmin University), and happened upon a legal science class in which the professor was talking about a case surprisingly similar to his.

In the next months Qin lingered on the campus, even though he was no more than an unidentified vagabond in Beijing, hanging about on the campus of Renmin University and the homes of his friends and classmates,



Qin dreams of running for the local people’s congress.

“I could never imagine my life being ordinary, submissive or mediocre. That would be unbearable,” says Qin. “Even in my worst days, I always sought to live with dignity, honesty and high morale.”

while listening in on law classes and going to appeal centers. When he decided to try the qualification test for lawyers he was so poor he even had to read books in the bookstore. But he managed to get the certificate, and joined a small law firm the next year, when he was 29.

“I like being a lawyer,” says Qin. “It combines independence, freedom, social justice and commercial profit.”

During his first three years of legal consulting, Qin was amazed by the volume and variety of malpractice in this area. There were customers who were denied legal property ownership certificates, owners who found their houses much smaller than described, residents who were forced to make room for property developers, and proprietors who were even beaten for complaining about the parking price. Outraged, Qin recorded hundreds of such cases and determined to find a solution.

“Buying a house is the biggest expenditure for most Chinese households, so doing something about this problem can safeguard the main interests of average Chinese consumers,” says Qin. One summer’s night in 1999, Qin suddenly woke up and, as if inspired by an oracle, started writing down a list of clauses for house purchasing:

“The seller should provide a quality assessment report of the real estate for the buyer to review and confirm; otherwise the transaction could be seen as invalid.”

“The buyer is entitled to share with other buyers his/her concern about the quality

or property management level of the real estate, and shouldn’t be prohibited from doing so.”

“Structures built on the public premises of the living compound should fulfill the needs of the residents and shouldn’t injure the buyers’ interests and rights.”

The list continued like this and became the prototype of his *204 Provisions* which was first published in full in *Beijing Youth Daily* in 2001. It soon aroused controversy across the nation and became the media’s number one talking point. Qin found himself being invited to numerous TV programs, online discussions, the nationwide 315 Consumers’ Rights Evening Show, and being asked to write newspaper columns. He became one of China’s most famous lawyers overnight.

Qin was suddenly on the frontline of a national struggle; trying to fight the ordinary house-buyer’s corner against large profit-driven property companies. After three years, Qin Bing is still not too optimistic about his goal. Although some changes in the model contracts of house purchasing have been made in Beijing and other places, the property market still favors the seller. Many property dealers have publicly rebuked Qin’s *204 Provisions* as “a daydream”, “nonsense” or “too far-fetched.” And no consumer has yet successfully signed a contract with all the clauses recognized.

“I just wish that the provisions could serve as an impetus for the self-discipline of property sellers and a reference for consumers. It is a personal effort, not for publicity but for the sake of real progress,” says Qin. “If I am misunderstood, so be it.”

Dream three: empower the nation
Qin is not particularly religious, but he did once have a dream that he was cloaked in a monk’s cassock and looking down on a world of misery and suffering. “I was deeply moved and wished so much to help people,” he recalls.

Qin has opened his own website with many topics from property to labor law, international relations and Chinese elections. The website, qinbing.com, has now

attracted about 2.5 million visitors with active updates of news and discussions. Colleagues at his law firm and other partners help him with it, all part of Qin’s desire to enlighten more people on the state of China’s legislation, law enforcement and civil rights protection.

“In order to protect the rights of the people, the most important thing is always people’s awareness and solidarity,” says Qin. “In house purchase disputes for example, most of my time is usually spent on getting the buyers united. Otherwise many of them will just stand by and avoid taking any risks or bearing responsibilities.”

For these people Qin Bing has also developed a special kind of “Involvement Agreement”, in which anyone who wishes to enjoy the benefits of any legal action must agree to be adequately involved in the whole process. Where there is right, he says, there is responsibility. Qin has even opened a hotline number 86009518 (the 95 standing for “help me out” in Chinese) on which he or his assistants will direct the caller to a most suitable place for help.

Dream four: join congress

Qin still has many dreams: to reduce unfair treatment of migrants in Beijing, to safeguard labor rights under dire working conditions (Qin himself spent two years working in a chemical

factory), to safeguard the rights of shareholders in cases of property transfer, to give more priority to legal awareness than the study of English in Chinese schools, and more.

Some of these dreams might be fulfilled, some may never seem likely in the foreseeable future. But Qin has never stopped dreaming. Among his dreams, the most prominent is his drive to run for a congressman.

“I believe in the power of the law, and I believe in myself. If I am elected a congressman, I will try my best to put forward more proposals and help the people,” he says. “I will run for the next round of congress election at the district level in Beijing and I look forward to the participation of more lawyers in the congress. It will be easier to realize my dreams if I make it to the congress.” Knowing that most Chinese congress members are still not full-time politicians, Qin

is now rallying support from the public and focusing on this goal.

Will Qin stick to his principles if he succeeds in the election? Will he be softened from a Don Quixote to a Don Juan? Qin says not. “Although I am not a saint free from human weaknesses, I believe I am less likely to be corrupted than many others.” Qin is no millionaire. He, his wife and daughter are still living in a rented 3-room apartment. Perhaps he’s inspired by the Tang Dynasty poet Du Fu, who dreamt of “a shelter for everyone” while he himself had no roof over his head. At any rate, big as Qin’s dreams are, he has convinced a lot of people that dreams are not so far out of reach.



From Ritual to Cutting Edge

Exhibition of the art of the ancient Congo

By Li Ruifen

The exhibition attempts to reflect the distinctive world view of the African nations, their indomitable spirit and their artistic creativity. Including some 300 objects of African art, it consists of ten sections: Natural Environment; History and Art; Birth, Youth and Initiation; Marriage and Fertility; Daily Life in old Congo; Belief and Art; Ritual Specialists; Social Stratification and Titleholders; Death, Afterlife and Ancestors; and Art History and World Perception. By showing the various aspects of the Congo kingdom, its religion, customs, language and art, the exhibition presents an Africa with a profound culture and unique arts.

Astounded by familiarity

Although the artifacts on show are from the ancient Congo Kingdom of Africa, visitors walking through the exhibition hall are likely to feel a sense of familiarity. The very first object on display is a Congo mask depicting a male Chinese face. The exquisite wooden facemask is rendered in golden-colored wood, showing the high status of the owner.

The mask displays a number of features with Chinese characteristics: A tiny moustache under the nose, and a faint coiffure subtly visible as a field of minute dots. The ears and nose, small eyes and eyelids are carved with exquisite detail and realism. With his mouth opening aggressively, framed by sensuous lips, the mask seems to be expressing anger or disdain.

According to Marc Leo Felix, the organizer of the exhibition, the mask was worn by a male in rituals to portray the strangeness and alien quality of foreigners. He also mentioned that Chinese people might have enjoyed a high social status in ancient Congo and that the founder of the kingdom was actually the grandson of a Chinese man.

Throughout the exhibition, there are many objects that similarly display a Chinese influence, including motifs of flowers with a small circle in the middle and several elliptical petals, animals that resemble Chinese dragons and similar divinatory objects used in rituals. "We found there are some similarities between the arts of the ancient Congo and the art of China. We don't doubt that during the Ming Dynasty, Chinese art might have had a certain influence on the art of Congo. As a result, we decided to go back to Congo and try to find traces of the Ming Dynasty of China."

The ancient Congo kingdom, founded in the 14th century, was like a bright pearl in the crown of African art, thriving and shining for hundreds of years. An exhibition at the National Museum, titled *From Ritual to Cutting Edge*, showcases for the first time in China the art of this mysterious kingdom.



Female bust for fertility rituals, early 20th century.



Ritual spoon, early 20th century.



Figurine depicting a female ritualist, 19th century.



Diviner's implement container, 20th century.

Photos by Tian Xiaotong

Growing up

People of the Congo kingdom, which covered an area that now comprises of the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire), Angola and Congo Republic, attached great importance to the rituals of growing up. Both men and women had to go through important initiation rites in order to be accepted as an adult. These rituals were often physically painful and typically lasted for three to six months.

In the *Youth and Initiation* section, there is a small, elaborately carved statue showing vividly a young boy being taken from his mother for such a ritual. When boys reached a certain age, they would be taken into the forest where they would be left for a period of time to fend for themselves. Even if he was frightened and unwilling to go, the mother would chase him away in order that he would become a man. After the initiation, the boy would go to live with other young men, and might not see his mother again for a year, or even several years.

The Ritual Spoon with Maternity Scene was made in the late 19th or early 20th century. An adult female holding a smaller figure forms the handle of a spoon, which was an important object in certain initiation rites for girls. As the spoon was a symbol of nourishing and nurturing, it may have been used to ritually feed the girl being initiated. Another occasion to use such a spoon was when a baby was fed solid food for the first time.

Daily life

Similar to the hierarchical system of ancient China, people of the Congo Kingdom placed great emphasis on social status. Among the objects on display, are several figures whose front teeth are chipped or missing. Damaged teeth symbolized beauty, dignity, nobility and high rank.

An object in this section titled *Gourd Shaped Clay Burled Vessel* stands out for its unique design and special material. The beautiful terracotta vessel was made during the mid-19th century. Its body is covered with a dark mottled pattern that is the result of a specialized technique. According to Marc Leo Felix, the special pattern is made with the addition of human fat to the clay, which also indicates the high status of the owner.

Beliefs and art

Virtually every object on display carries a special meaning, and is related in some way to the religion of the people. They worshipped genies and spirits of nature and the earth, and believed that their ancestors could intercede to improve their lives.

Figure of a Defiant Male is a wooden effigy carved around the third quarter of the 19th century. The figure stands atop a base with his left arm planted defiantly on his hip, right arm raised aggressively in a fist with raised thumb. His chipped teeth and a pair of bangles carved on his right wrist and upper left arm indicate that he is a man of rank and title. This figure encapsulates the Congo people's respect for heaven and ancestors; the raised hand pointing to the sky symbolizes heaven and the hand on the hip symbolizes the ancestors.

One of the most eye-catching objects in the exhibitions is titled *Metal-studded female wooden figure*. The reddish figure is carved from tukula-dyed wood and is 68 cm high. She stands on a wooden base, with knees bent and hands resting on her lower belly. The torso is studded with a multitude of pieces of iron; nails, screws, knife blades and agrarian tools. This figure was ritually employed by a community, rather than an individual. People would hammer a metal object into the statue and attach a cloth of a specific color to it. A red cloth signified something was wanted from somebody living, a white cloth was used when asking something of the spirits, while a black cloth was used when placing a curse on somebody.

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What's on DVD

By Sabu



Kill Bill: Vol. 2

In Vol. 2, the Bride continues her vendetta against the remaining members of the Deadly Vipers, and gears up for her ultimate mission – to kill Bill, the leader of the hit squad. DVD 9, English and French with English, French, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese and Korean subtitles. Special features include production notes, cast interviews and deleted scenes.



Dogville

Written and directed by Lars von Trier, this provocative film is set in an imaginary Rocky Mountains town, represented by a stage with chalk markings and a few props. Nicole Kidman plays a stranger who arrives in the town during the Great Depression, concealing a dangerous secret. DVD 9, English with English and Chinese subtitles. Extras include audio commentary and behind-the-scenes featurette.



Vertigo

Alfred Hitchcock's most acclaimed thriller, Vertigo revolves around obsession, deception and a carefully planned murder – classic Hitchcock territory. DVD 9, English and Japanese with English, Chinese, Japanese and Korean subtitles. Extra materials include production notes, a theatrical trailer, audio commentary and original soundtracks.

One Wife Too Many



By Yu Shanshan

Husband and wife team Lai Shengchuan and Ding Nai-zheng are well known to Beijing theatre buffs. The couple from Taiwan are returning to Beijing with their third adaptation of the comedy *He Doesn't Have Two Wives*, by Zou Houlin, performed by Tianjin People's Art Theatre.

Inspired by the British comedy *Run For your Wife*, by Ray Cooney, Lai and Ding have put their own stamp on the story, relocated the action from London to Taipei.

Zhang Ligu, the hero, is a taxi driver, unsophisticated and uncomplicated, living happily with his wife Yu Lian as the story opens.

One day while driving, he stumbles into a romantic encounter with a cosmetic sales representative and ... marries her. For the next four years, Zhang is able to balance his two lives, so that neither woman suspects his secret.

One day, however, Zhang picks up a gangleader while driving his taxi, and finds himself in a series of misadventures as he and the gangleader are chased by the police and paparazzi. The two are flung into the spotlight, and Zhang's secret is out.

The theme of a man with two wives is only the tip of the iceberg in this hilarious comedy in which Lai tears up the themes of seemingly happy marriages and orderly social settings.

He Doesn't Have Two Wives premiered in 1997 in Taiwan, and was staged in Beijing in 1999 and 2002. In this production, Liu Jingfan plays the husband and Zhang Yanqiu and Zhu Yixuan play his two wives.

When: August 26-29 **Where:** Tianqiao Theatre **Tickets:** 40 - 280 yuan **Tel:** 8315 6170

Billboard Singles Top 5

Title	Artist	Album
Slow Motion	Juvenile featuring Soulja Slim	Juve the Great
Lean Back	Terror Squad	True Story
Confessions Part II	Usher	Confessions
Turn Me On	Kevin Lyttle featuring Spragga Benz	Kevin Lyttle
Sunshine	Lil' Flip featuring Lea	U Gotta Feel Me



Official UK Singles Top 5

Title	Artist	Album
Thunderbirds	Busted	A Present for Everyone
Dry Your Eyes	The Streets	A Grand don't Come for Free (CD-Single)
Lola's Theme	Shapeshifters	Anastacia
Sick and Tired	Anastacia	Under My Skin
My Happy Ending	Avril Lavigne	My Skin



On the US Billboard, Juvenile fends off competitors for the second week in a row, with the rapper's *Slow Motion* featuring Soulja Slim remaining in the No. 1 spot. The single from his latest Cash Money/Universal album, *Juve the Great*, also tops the Hot 100 Airplay chart for a second week. Terror Squad's *Lean Back* looks to be the most likely contender to challenge Juve. This

week the track rises 3-2 on the Hot 100 and tops Billboard's Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Singles and Tracks, Hot Rap Tracks and Hot R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay charts.

On the UK Chart, good fortune held for Busted. Their *Thunderbirds* / 3AM (Universal) remained on top of the singles survey for a second week, while the Chili Peppers' *Live in Hyde Park* tops the album chart, also

for a second week. Two new singles entered the top 5, both of them by female artists. American singer Anastacia, whose self-titled third Epic album has been certified double platinum in the UK and rebounds 7-4 on that chart this week, debuted at No. 4 with *Sick and Tired*. Avril Lavigne's *My Happy Ending* (Arista) arrived at No. 5.

Edited by Wang Xiaoxiao

WORLDWIDE

Collateral Cruises to Top Spot

Crime may not pay for Tom Cruise. The box office superhero's first outing as a villain, in director Michael Mann's thriller *Collateral*, made off with a middling \$24.4 million during its first three days at the North American box office, according to studio estimates issued Sunday.

The opening is in the same range as Cruise's previous R-rated efforts, like last December's *The Last Samurai* (\$24.3 million) and 2001's *Vanilla Sky* (\$25 million). But it represents the second-smallest No. 1 debut this summer. The smallest was the anti-Bush documentary *Fahrenheit 9/11*, which earned \$23.9 million on many fewer screens.

Last weekend's champion, writer/director M. Night Shyamalan's suspense film *The Village*, fell to No. 2 with \$16.6 million, as bad word-of-mouth saw the film lose a hefty two-thirds of its audience from last weekend. **(Reuters)**



Outgoing PM Goh honored by Singaporeans

Outgoing Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong was warmly honored by Singaporeans as the country marked its 39th independence day in the midst of a political transition and economic resurgence.

Goh, 63, who will step down Thursday in favor of his deputy Lee Hsien Loong, 52, received a standing ovation when he appeared at the National Stadium ahead of a traditional evening parade culminating in a fireworks show.

He also got a congratulatory handshake from Lee's father, Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew, 80, who stepped down 14 years ago in favor of Goh, launching the wealthy city-state's tradition of well-scripted, orderly transitions. **(AFP)**



Singaporean National Day

Rhode Island Film Festival Starts Tuesday

Rhode Island, the smallest state in the US, is gearing up to host New England's largest film festival, with entries by actors Andrew McCarthy and Zach Braff.

The six-day Rhode Island International Film Festival kicks off Tuesday, and will feature 265 films from across the United States and over 60 countries. Organizers expect about 20,000 people to attend.

McCarthy, of *Pretty in Pink* fame, is making his directorial debut at the festival, and Braff, who plays a doctor on NBC's *Scrubs*, is receiving an award.

George Marshall, executive director and chief executive of the festival, said the event attracts a lot of filmmakers because it is the only one in New England where a film can qualify for an Academy Award. He said five films screened at the festival in the past seven years have been nominated for Oscars, and two have won. **(AP)**



Andrew McCarthy

Edited by Chen Si



Lindsay Lohan

Lindsay Lohan Wins Four Teen Choice Awards

Lindsay Lohan, who turned 18 last month, collected a leading four awards Sunday night at the 2004 Teen Choice Awards held at the Universal Amphitheater, Universal City, California.

Lohan won awards for best movie actress in a comedy, best movie hissy fit and best movie blush for her part in the hit film *Mean Girls*. She also collected the award for movie breakout star actress for her work in both *Mean Girls* and *Freaky Friday*.

The awards show was hosted by Paris Hilton and Nicole Richie. Musical guests included Blink-182, Ashlee Simpson, Lenny Kravitz and JoJo. **(AP)**

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Straight Talk about Professional Interpreting

With globalization a growing trend and China becoming more a part of it since entering the World Trade Organization, professional interpreting is a career field on a steep rise in this country. Top simultaneous interpreters can earn more than 4,000 yuan per working day, which is fueling both great interest in the field and the development of dedicated training programs.

However, many people's impressions of professional interpreting are not very accurate. To get to the bottom of what the interpreting market is really like and what it takes to make it as a professional interpreter, *Beijing Today* talked to the experts.

State of the China market

"Most of the professional simultaneous interpreters in China have passed United Nations authentication in this country, but that training program ended in 1993. Today, such a course is offered at the Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation of Beijing Foreign Studies University. However, the program is not the same as in the past and its interpreter certification is also somewhat different.

Around 70 to 80 people were authenticated as interpreters before 1993, and all of them are still active," Zhang Zailiang, for-



Professional simultaneous interpreters earn high pay, but face heavy stress and must have exceptional language abilities and solid general knowledge.

mer deputy director of the English department of Beijing Foreign Studies University said.

"With China's economic boom and the deepening of reform and opening-up, there is increasing demand for professionals who can perform to international standards. The mismatch in today's market is not one of quantity but one of quality - there are many interpreters with basic skills, but very few true professionals who have gone through high-quality training and can deliver services of international caliber. There is now a small but growing market for

professional conference interpreters. This market only got started in the 1990s and today is still in the early stages of development," noted Du Yunde, a member of the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) and chairman of the interpreting department of the Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation of Shanghai International Studies University.

"The professional fees commanded by conference interpreters in Shanghai are in the range of 4,000-6,000 yuan per working day. The range is basically the same in Beijing and other major Asian cities.

"At present, the number of AIIC members in the Chinese mainland is 22, with 14 in Beijing and eight in Shanghai. This rather low number reflects the fact that a real market for professional interpreting services is only now just beginning to take shape here, and underscores the need for high-quality training that can produce interpreters of international caliber," Dr. Du said.

Qualifications for Competitiveness

Dr. Zhang said, "Working as a professional interpreter takes more than just ability or knowledge," said Dr. Zhang.

He and Du agreed that anyone hoping to enter the interpreting field needed very strong command of his or her native language and at least one foreign language, as well as a solid background of general knowledge. That means a person needs to be well read and familiar and conversant across a wide range of fields, from international affairs and politics to eco-

nomics, business and more.

"Strong oral communication skills, the ability to express oneself clearly, precisely and articulately, powers of concentration, analysis, synthesis, ability to perform under pressure, quick reactions and pleasant voice are all very important competencies in this career," Du said.

Zhang added, "Knowledge is accumulated through time and hard work. Anyone who wants to start down this career path should practice relentlessly and find a very professional teacher."

Steps to get started

"Read widely, especially non-fiction, in all your languages. Read an English and a Chinese newspaper every day, and read a couple of weekly news magazines in both English and Chinese every week. This is a great way to build up you general knowledge while at the same time improving your language skills," Du recommended.

"Another good exercise is to listen to tapes of texts or events in different fields in your spare time. The primary training mode is to repeat what is said, repeating five words in each sentence each time. In general, however, studying to be an interpreter is not well suited to undergraduate students, as they don't have enough time to focus on their practical and professional skills. Not everyone is right for this field," Zhang said.

Both Beijing and Shanghai are home to graduate-level education institutions that offer training in professional interpretation. The Graduate Institute of Interpretation and Translation at Shanghai International Studies University was established to realize a Ministry of Education mandate to train simultaneous interpreters up to the highest international standards.

Lessons from the past

"Professional interpretation is not a perfect art. Being mentally agile and bright is very important. Of course, what is most important is doing your best, working hard and practicing all the time," Zhang said.

Du stated, "This profession is challenging and stressful, but also immensely rewarding. It is fundamentally about communication, about helping people talk with each other about things that matter. The joy of contributing to effective communication and hence to increased understanding more than outweighs the stress that comes with the job."

Corporate HR

Novartis: People-centered Platform for Open Minds

By Xie Lixue

On August 5, Jin Lihua, head of the human resources department of Beijing Novartis Pharma Ltd. talked to *Beijing Today* about her company's corporate culture, recruitment and training systems.

Beijing Today: What is Novartis' corporate philosophy? And what is the role of the company's HR department?

Jin Lihua: In Novartis, we consider our people as our most valuable resources, because people make the company different. In daily life, a more systematic approach is taken to attract, train and retain our people. We offer this value proposition to employees: great jobs, great pay and great long-term career and training opportunities.

For example, every month, we have the General Manager Friendship Lunch, at which Mr. James Liu, president of Beijing Novartis, visits employees, introduces the company's achievements and asks them about challenges they face in their work. Good communication between leadership and employees at all levels and commitment from management to motivate people has led to great business results in the past several years.

Our HR department is customer-oriented, providing professional HR services based on business dynamics. Of course this also depends on excellence in our daily operations in terms of providing timely, accurate HR administrative support.

BT: What kinds of factors do you focus on in recruitment interviews?

Jin: We ask all sorts of questions to assess candidates' skills and attitudes, but there is always one key question: 'Why are you applying to work at Novartis?'. We believe that no matter what jobs candidates are applying for, we would like them to enjoy what they do. That may be somewhat idealistic, but we genuinely hope that every employee will be happy and comfortable at work while possessing the skills needed to do the job well.

BT: In what areas does Novartis have demand for new talent now?

Jin: We need some professional medical representatives able to provide doctors with updated information on specific disease therapies and new medicines and give us feedback based on use of those products. We also are looking for clinic research associates and medical advisors.

BT: Since Novartis is a multinational pharmaceutical company, do you offer English training to employees?

Jin: Yes, English is very important and used frequently here. Almost everyone get involved in the translation of the large amount of medical materials that come in every day. We offer 3,000 yuan to each employee to improve their English, either through Internet-based programs or special English training, such as in medical English and business English. However, training is only one way to improve language skills - we also strongly encourage our employees to actively learn through projects.

BT: Do you recruit recent university graduates?

Jin: Through our 'university relations' program, we cooperate with universities to provide lectures and internship projects to college students. We don't do it only to recruit university graduates, we also believe that promoting the idea of corporate citizenship and making a better life for people will inspire talented young people to success in all fields.

BT: Do you have any suggestions for graduates hoping to work at Novartis?

Jin: I would not say this is a suggestion, but it is true that companies welcome talented people who are open-minded, creative, good team players and great learners, as learning is a life-long journey. Also, no matter which company you want to join, you should understand the culture and principle of the company because that can provide true long-term motivation and career satisfaction.



Jin Lihua

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Private Universities: Future of Education in China?

By Zhang Nan

The Second Chinese-Foreign University Presidents Forum kicked off Tuesday at the Diaoyutai State Guest House. During the week-long event, around 14 presidents of foreign universities will present speeches and take part in discussions along with their counterparts from Chinese institutions of higher education.

A major focus of discussion so far has been the status of private universities in this country despite, or perhaps because, the fact that no private university presidents were invited to attend the forum.

State of the private art

There are 214 private universities operating in China, according to the Ministry of Education data. Of those only Beijing City University is authorized to bestow bachelor degrees, and the other schools are all professional schools. The total ranks of private universities is a mere fraction of the more than 1,600

public institutions of higher education around the country.

"Private universities in China are still relatively weak academically," a report in *China Youth Daily* noted on Monday. "So far, there is not a single private university that has the academic strength to truly compete with public universities."

As a result, few students willingly choose private universities to continue their education.

"It costs more than studying in public universities and few enterprises in China accept diplomas granted by private universities in recruiting," Zhang Siqi, a graduate of Beijing Union University, told *Beijing Today* on Tuesday. "Besides, many people doubt the quality of education at private schools."

Those conditions distinguish China from many countries, where private universities are not only competitive, but sometimes superior to public institutions.

Private universities abroad

American private universi-

ties such as Stanford University and all the Ivy League schools enjoy enviable reputations around the world.

In the US, most private schools are run by social foundations or religion groups. They can also get financial aid from both the federal and local governments.

"There are two branches of the American education system — one is public universities and the other is private ones," Lee C. Bollinger, president of Columbia University, said at the forum. "There is fierce competition between public and private schools, which in turn creates a lot of benefits for American education."

More than half the universities in the US are private, according to information from the China Education and Research Network. The figures in Japan and South Korea are above 70 percent, showing clearly that private schools play a crucial role in the development of higher education in those countries.

Future of Chinese private Universities

"Economic globalization is pushing companies to require their employees to have better educational backgrounds," Martin Carnoy, a professor at Stanford University, was quoted as saying by *China Youth Daily* on Monday. "Therefore, higher education in China will expand in coming years."

Regarding the role of private universities in that development, Mr. Katsuhiko Shirai, president of Waseda University of Japan said, "Private universities will be very important in increasing the numbers of educated people and popularizing higher education in China."

Such speculation is based on more than mere hope. The Chinese government has already set policies to promote private education in this country, backed up by a directive issued in March by the Ministry of Education that sets statues for the growth and improvement of private education.

Ask Ayi:

Q: I just graduated from high school in June. Since my score on the *gaokao* is not good, I am planning to go to Australia for university. However, I do not have the needed language test marks. Is it possible for me to apply for language learning and preparatory courses there?

— C zcm112

A: You can apply for such courses if your marks in high school are good and you have enough money to support your study and life in Australia.

High school graduates are required to have IELTS scores above five to be accepted by an Australian university, and that is really hard for most young people.

Therefore, it may be a better idea to first take language and preparatory courses in China. IELTS courses last 10 weeks, while preparatory courses will take a year to complete. Once you have a good enough IELTS mark, you can apply to universities in Australia.

When applying for a visa, you should also provide the Australian Embassy with a bank savings deposit statement of around 550,000 yuan to guarantee you can afford your studies.

Q: I have a driver's license in China. Can I use it to legally drive in Australia?

— calendar

A: Each of Australia's states has different regulations. In some states, you can directly use your Chinese license after going through some necessary procedures. However, in other states, you have to take tests of traffic rules and driving skills. Contact relevant offices in the state where you are going to study for more detailed information.

Q: Is the IELTS the only test recognized in Australia? I have a good score on TOEFL, so can I use that to apply to Australia universities?

— Rosemary

A: IELTS is the most widely recognized test in Australia. A TOEFL score can be used for applying to Australian universities, but does not help with the visa application process, when the only valid test is the IELTS.

Q: What documents require notarization when applying to Australian universities?

— abba

A: Generally speaking, you need to notarize your four-year scores from school, your graduation certificate and your degree certificate. Some universities may also ask for notarization of your birth certificate.

(Edited by Zhang Nan / Xie Lixue)

University of Waikato: an Attractive Package

New Zealand's University of Waikato runs several joint programs in China and offers international students world-class teaching and research standards at competitive costs.

"Combine all these with a friendly, supportive atmosphere, an exciting mix of cultures and a very attractive city and it all adds up to a very attractive package," said Dr. Peter Oetli, pro vice-chancellor (international) of the university, while chatting with *Beijing Today* readers in the Study Abroad Salon on Monday afternoon.

Basic information:

How old is your university? What does Waikato mean?

— grape

The University of Waikato was founded in 1964, so it is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year.

Waikato means 'swirling waters' and is the name of the river that flows through the district and through the city of Hamilton.

What is the location of your university? Are there any recreation facilities on campus?

— classified

The campus is located on the edge of Hamilton, which is the fourth biggest city in New Zealand, and it is one-and-a-half hours' drive from the biggest city, Auckland.

The campus is beautifully landscaped with modern buildings and facilities. We have a large recreation center on campus, over 150 cultural and sporting clubs, large sporting grounds (64 hectares), a swimming pool, squash courts, etc.

Academic strengths and joint programs with China:

Please give us ten reasons why students from China should choose your university as a place to study?

— hostayi

There are about 50 good reasons, but here are a few:

1) The University of Waikato provides good support facilities and care for all international students. Special care is offered to Chinese students, such as issuing them referral letters for applying for study-abroad certificates. 2) We have an international reputation and our management school is top in the country. 3) We are also the leading university in computer science and mathematics. 4) We can provide a semester exchange for Chinese (and other international) students with top universities around the world. 5) We have a beautiful campus with modern facilities. 6) We

are situated in the heart of the North Island, within easy driving distance of all the major attractions. 7) We have excellent support services both in the individual schools of studies (faculties) and centrally in the international center, with easy referrals to health and counseling services where required. 8) There is an active Chinese community in the city.

What are the academic strengths of your university?

— monkeyking

We have significant strengths in management, science and technology, engineering, computer science, education, arts and social sciences.

Do you have joint programs in China? How can I apply to those programs?

— app

Yes, we have a number of joint programs.

One is with Shanghai International Studies University, where students study in the first two

years of a management or arts and social science degree in China, then another two years here at the University of Waikato.

We also have joint programs with Zhejiang University City College in management and computer science. This program is in its third year of operation.

There is also a joint venture with the Hebei Education Commission for training experienced teachers in Western educational methodology and English.

To apply for any of these programs, I suggest you get in touch with the relevant Chinese institution.

Chinese student population:

What is the percentage of Chinese students in your university? Do you have a ceiling on the number of Chinese/ international students enrolled each year?

— round orange

At the moment, the percent-

age of Chinese students is 16 percent. However, the spread is uneven, with a higher percentage in areas such as management, and a lower percentage in fields like education.

We have no formal ceiling on international or Chinese students at the moment. We screen our applicants on the quality of their English language and academic abilities generally, and we recruit students to ensure that there is a mix of international students from all over the world so that both international and New Zealand students have the opportunity to experience working with a variety of cultures.

Applications and scholarships:

When is the best time to start the application process? How many semesters do you have each year?

— pinkpig

We have two semesters, the first (A) semester is from early March to the end of June, the sec-

ond (B) semester starts in mid-July and runs to mid-November. There is also an intensive summer school from early January through to late February.

It is best to apply as early as possible, leaving time for you to get all the necessary documentation.

The final date by which complete applications have to be received by the university is December 1 for the A semester of the following year, and May 1 for the B semester of the current year.

How can students apply to your university?

— zcsstar

The easiest way to apply is to go to our website, <http://www.waikato.ac.nz> and use one of the addresses given on the international pages, or write directly to international@waikato.ac.nz.

Can you introduce scholarships offered at your university and how international students should apply for them?

— Chinadoll

At the moment our university does not have scholarships specifically for international students.

Our government has, however, just announced that it has set aside money for scholarships to bring gifted students from overseas to New Zealand for study. The details have not yet been announced. You are suggested to check the websites of our Ministry of Education and Education New Zealand for information or write to international@waikato.ac.nz.

Tuition and living fees:

Is tuition rising in New Zealand? What are the standard tuition fees and living costs at your university?

— window125

It is true that costs have risen. One of the main reasons has been the increase in the value of the New Zealand dollar. However, it is still very competitive indeed if you take into account the high quality of our degrees.

Tuition fees depend on the level of the course and the programs of study, ranging between US\$9,000 and 20,000 per year.

Living costs depend on your personal requirements. We suggest that you should budget on between US\$8,000 and US\$11,000 per year.

Does the university provide international students with accommodation? Can I rent a room myself?

— grape

The university has hostels (halls of residence) both on campus and within walking distance of campus. Some of them have dining halls and others are self-catering.

Many students, particularly after their first year at university, share an apartment or a house with their friends. Costs vary, de-

pending on the place and your requirements. We recommend that you budget between US\$8,000 and US\$11,000 per year for all-inclusive living expenses.

Language and future career:

What is the language requirement for international students whose first language is not English? I have been doing part-time jobs in Australia for almost three years. Do I still have to provide evidence of English language proficiency?

— flyfish123

Our language proficiency requirements vary depending on the degree you wish to take. Our regulations state that certain scores on the TOEFL or IELTS, or their equivalents, have to be achieved. If you have worked in Australia for three years you may qualify under that clause.

What are the career prospects of international students who major in IT or architecture in New Zealand? Is it possible for them to find jobs?

— Xray

There appear to be plenty of jobs in IT and architecture in New Zealand, and once international students have graduated, they can work in their field for a limited time.

There are, however, two considerations. Firstly, international students compete with New Zealand students on the job market, and secondly, you would have to apply for a residence permit. Neither are insuperable hurdles, though.

Do you provide internship opportunities to students? What kind of job prospects can university graduates expect?

— pine trees

There are some internship opportunities particularly in some degree courses, such as the BSc (Tech). International students, however, compete with New Zealand students for part-time work.

As far as the difficulty of finding a job is concerned, New Zealand currently has one of its lowest unemployment rates for more than a decade. If you have a good degree, very good English, and are prepared to take a position near the beginning of the career ladder, you should have a good chance in competition with New Zealand applicants. You will need to get the necessary residence and work permits of course.

(Edited by Zhang Nan)

Notice:

The third guest in Focus on New Zealand at *Beijing Today's Study Abroad Salon* will be Professor Roy Sharp, Vice-Chancellor of University of Canterbury.

Time: 1-2 pm, Monday, August 16



Dr. Peter Oetli



Tattoo You!



Longxiutang

By Sabu

Those in the know look to the Longxiutang Tattoo shop in Xijiekou to get some of the best permanent body art offered anywhere in China.

The parlor is operated and the tattoos needled by Qi Xulong, who has been tattooing for six years and opened the store in 2000. Qi's interest in Tibetan Buddhism and its influence on his art come clear with one step in the door, as the walls are covered with all kinds of Tibetan tokens, many of a sacrificial nature.

He said that among his favorite patterns to tattoo are *gabala*, ritual vessels made of human skulls adorned with silver, some of which are made extra fearsome with the addition of horns or tusks with the intent of exorcising evil spirits.

Xiaolong, as he is known to friends, is a skillful painter with a special taste for traditional Chinese and Tibetan images. Pictures on the wall portray the flesh of friends bearing some of his original artistic creations – dragons, serpents, fish, demons, skeletons, Tibetan totems and a tranquil goddess, rendered in unusual three-dimensional effects.

Black and white tats tend to run around 800 yuan to 900 yuan, while colored versions begin at 1,000 yuan. To round out the look, the store also sells a selection of silver accessories and jewelry, like earrings and pendants (30 yuan to 100 yuan).

Sanitation is a given at Longxiutang, as Qi uses a high-pressure stove, nearly impossible to find at other studios, along with high-temperature and ultraviolet treatments to make sure not a germ lives.

Xiaolong gushed that tattooing was more than a growing business, it offered a connection to the divine while also opening windows into the beliefs and personalities of the artist and his human canvases.

Where: No.159 Xijiekou Nandajie, Xicheng Open: 11 am - 12 pm Tel: 6417 7873

Purgatory Tattoo

By Wang Yao

Purgatory is exactly where both your mother and tattoo artist Li Ran think you should go if you want to get a tattoo. Li, owner of the Purgatory Tattoo studio, explained she picked the name not only for its immediate impact, but also because she sees tattoo art as sparking a metamorphosis that can lift people from humdrum life and into a higher state of being.

In direct contrast to its namesake, Purgatory has been designed for comfort, with the first floor occupied by a pleasant lounge and the second floor home to the cozy, tidy studio.

Li, a graduate in art and design from Tsinghua University, was the first woman tattoo artist in Beijing and has several years of experience creating patterns and deftly needling them into skin. Her partner is Jing Shuang, another Tsinghua grad, who has studied art since he was three and has learned to smoothly integrate Chinese traditions into fashionable tattoo patterns.

This tattooing duo studied design in Europe in 2001, and decided to turn their experience into living art when they returned and opened their parlor.

As would be expected, sanitation and safety are of paramount concern, and all needles go through complete sterilization through high temperature, ultraviolet and other cleaning methods.

Li and Jing do their best to make their clients comfortable, even during the discomfort of getting cut, so they tend to chat them up, especially the women. Li said, "Tattoos are paintings of the soul put on a person's body, and the dynamism of that canvas can give paintings new life."

Where: B-11 west part of Longfu Market, Dongcheng Open: 24 hours Tel: 6402 2482



Photos by Sabu and Jiang Xiaowei

The taboo on tattoos seems to fade fast in this country and tattoos are no longer just battle gear for rebellious youth, former sailors and shady types. Done right, tattoos can be the ultimate visual declarations of personality, putting other stylistic choices like haircut or outfit to shame. To make the strongest statement, remember to be creative. Tattoos come in myriad patterns and can be needled into every inch of one's flesh, from arms and backs to ears, heads and even the inside of the mouth!

Here, *Beijing Today* introduces four of the more established tattoo parlors in town. When it comes to permanent body art, it pays not to skip and go for the best – could anything be worse than being stuck with a piece of bad art on your chest for a lifetime?

Beijing Tatman

By Wang Yao

The Dongsi area is a magnet for the tragically hip in this city, so it should come as no surprise that it is also home to a top-rate tattoo parlor, Beijing Tatman.

In a move of some humor, owner Yang Peng's parlor stands on the second floor of a building above a beauty salon, offering customers bolder and more permanent statements of style than mere makeovers.

A secret to Yang's success is his patient manner with customers. Instead of pushing potential clients to get cut quick, he likes to introduce people who walk through his door to trends in tattooing and possible effects getting a tattoo can have on one's life. He follows that with sage advice on patterns best suited to customers' personalities and price ranges.

Perhaps due to his refined aesthetics, or the store's location, Yang said most of his customers pick elegant designs, such as mermaids and angels, over more macho images of death heads and dragons. With his skilled hands, Yang can make tattoos truly unique by giving them the look of free-form sketches or elaborate oil paintings.

The same attention to detail marks his sanitation efforts, as he goes through many pairs of gloves a day and takes care to avoid any possible contamination, such as by dipping into a jar of cream with gloves that have touched skin. He also insists on using only top-quality, imported products.

The studio's walls are covered in photos of his works, such as a mermaid snaking down a woman's back and a Mike Tyson-style portrait of Chairman Mao on a man's upper arm.

In a typical gesture of care and professionalism, Yang warned tattoo lovers to beware of fluorescent colors on the market, some of which can trigger allergic reactions if used improperly.

Where: No.495 Dongsi Beidajie, Dongcheng Open: 24 hours Tel: 6401 8039

Yaksa Tattoo

By Sabu and Wang Yao

Rock stars' penchants for body art is almost as well documented as their proclivities for big hair and supermodels. Hu Song, singer for Chinese metal band Yaksa took that relationship to its natural end this June by opening a tattoo and piercing shop in Longfusi that shares his band's name.

The tattoos at Yaksa are designed and drawn by Hu along with partner Cingar, a member of the Asian Tattoo Association and professional artist with eight years of experience. Among their clients are plenty of friendly rockers from such local bands as Mu Ma and Hang on the Box (Gua Zai Hezi Shang).

Many of Cingar's creations show evidence of his travels to Tibet, where he opened the region's first tattoo studio and absorbed lots of local culture and religion.

Each tattooist gets his own studio in the interest of sanitation more than solitude. They only use imported non-mineral, non-carcinogenic paints and the cleanest of needles.

Customers can choose from over 10,000 patterns on offer at the store or bring in their own designs, and prices are very competitive. Hu and Cingar can also work miracles with cover-ups, repairs and enhancements of existing tattoos.

The third member of the Yaksa studio team is body piercing operator Liang Zi. Nose, nipple, bellybutton and eyebrow rings, tongue studs and even more outlandish piercings are all possible and tend to be priced between 100 yuan and 500 yuan.

Hu recommended to *Beijing Today* readers not to go for cheap tattoos at nameless studios or beauty salons, where they are most likely to use eyebrow shaping machines that produce poor-quality results. Rock attitude and customer service in one cool package – that's Yaksa for ya.

Where: C-50 Underground Shopping Mall, Longfusi, Dongsi, Dongcheng Open: 12 am - 7 pm Tel: 6403 5849

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Accommodation

A 60 square-meter, newly renovated, western style apartment for rent. Located in south of Sanlitun Bar street, 10 minutes walking distance from Jinguang Centre, Dragon Hotel. Converted from two bedrooms to one bedroom, with one decent size living room. \$800 per month. Contact: cprbj@eastnet.com.cn or 1390119224

One bedroom apartment in Mega Hall for rent – \$750! 70 square meters, wooden floor, nice furniture & deco, full home appliance, 24-hour hot water, security, underground parking, satellite TV and broadband Internet access. Contact: Ms. Dong, 13161023781, email: dsqjmy@163.com

An apartment in Phoenix City near Sanyuanqiao for rent. 183 square meters, 3 bedrooms, 2 sitting rooms, 2 bathrooms. Luxury decoration, full set of furniture. 12,000 yuan per month. Contact: Dai Jun, 13321185863

Sale and Wanted

New "Samsung" single-door refrigerator. Price: 500 yuan.

Contact: 6582 7154

Language Exchange

Vivian, a sales and marketing person, wants to know native English speakers to learn English. Her email: vivian.jin@cpparkviewbj.com

Personals

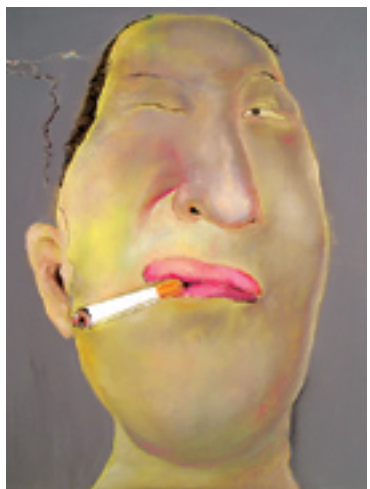
Does anyone know someone who can give belly dancing or Indian dancing classes? Contact: Josephine Ng, 6532-3131 ext. 1201, mobile: 13601228456

Digman, a part-time translator, wants to serve as a private tutor or guide for foreigners. Tel: 8697 9782

A Chinese girl, senior in college majoring in international trade, good at English, wants to find any legal part time job related to English and international trade. Her email: gaouxumei1981@eyou.com

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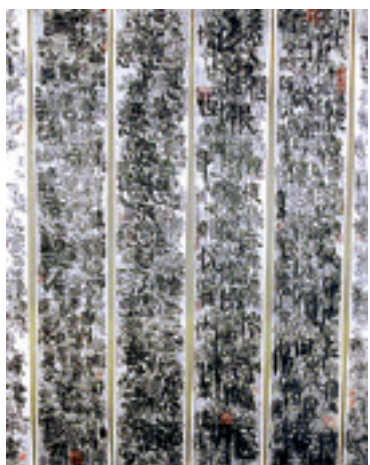
Exhibitions



Hedonistic Freedom

This exhibit displays the philosophy of most of the artists living in the Songzhuang community – a creed of freedom from market forces and public expectations that leads to real innovation. After living in the reclusive artist commune for years, they paint what they want to paint and don't worry about the consequences. Open only by appointment, so call ahead.

Where: No. 1 Renzhuangcun Beilu, Songzhuang, Tongxian **When:** till August 31, 9 am – 12 pm **Admission:** 15 yuan **Tel:** 13901244283



Social Portraits

Artist Qiu Zhijie splits his time between art production, teaching and writing and has distinguished himself as a prominent figure in Chinese and international art circles. His works chronicle seemingly random phenomena observed around China, the types of things that would go unnoticed by many people. This exhibition is a showcase of seven of his ongoing pet projects, called Social Portraits.

Where: Courtyard Gallery, 95 Donghuamen Dajie, Dongcheng **When:** till August 28, 10 am – 6 pm **Tel:** 6526 8882

Ancient Greece: Mortals and Immortals

This sweeping show displays the impressive history of ancient Greece through a collection of 120 precious relics covering 7,000 years and worth some 200 million yuan (\$24.4 million). The pieces were gathered from



37 Greek museums and include pottery sculptures, bronze items, marble sculptures and pottery paintings, many of which focus on the relation of humans to the gods and people's place in the universe.

Where: China National Museum, East side of Tian'anmen Square **When:** till August 31, 9 am – 4:30 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6512 8321



Only the Cat Knows

An exhibition of works by women artists Chen Qingqing and Yuan Yaomin.

Where: L.A. Gallery Beijing, Working People's Cultural Palace (Laodong Renmin Wenhua Gong), inside Worker's Park **When:** August 14 – September 14 **Admission:** free **Tel:** 6526 5045



Artistic Debutantes

The 360 Degree group, founded this year in Beijing, marks the launch of its first international tour with a debut exhibition at Imagine Gallery. The show features print works by Pekka Litmanen from Finland, photographs by Megumi Shimizu from Japan, paintings by Jayanta Mondal from India and ceramics by Reza from Bangladesh.

Where: Imagine Gallery, Feijiacun, Laiguangying Donglu, Chaoyang **When:** Till Sunday, 10 am – 6 pm **Admission:** free **Tel:** 13910917965

Performance

Sixth Asian Arts Festival



The sixth Asian Arts Festival is set to kick off on August 18 in Beijing and Jilin Province. Some 19 art troupes from 17 Asian countries will tour the capital and Jilin, performing traditional and modern works from their own countries while also cooperating and exchanging with their Chinese counterparts. Troupes taking part in this year's event include Ballet Philippines, a martial arts troupe from India, national song and dance ensembles from Bangladesh, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, and the chorus of the Indonesian National Symphony Orchestra.

There will also be two arts shows, the Asian Arts Exhibition and the Asia in My Heart Exhibition.

The festival will start on August 20 with a grand opening ceremony that will be attended by state leaders, officials from the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, renowned artists, diplomats and governmental delegations from participating Asian countries.

Where: Poly Theatre, Dongsishitiao, Dongcheng **When:** August 18-28 **Tel:** 6403 2705

Jams



Second Hand Roses

Second Hand Roses bring their butt-kicking, cross-dressing, Dongbei-inflected rock.

Where: Nameless Highland, 14 Anhuili Yiqu, Chaoyang **When:** Saturday, 9:30 pm **Admission:** 40 yuan (30 yuan for students) **Tel:** 6489 1613

Movies



Internal Affairs II

Directed by Andrew Lau and Alan Mak, starring Andy Lau, Tony Leung, Anthony Wong, Eric Tsang, Edison Chen, Shawn Yue, Carina Lau and Kelly Chen. The sequel to one of the biggest recent Hong Kong hits, this film

Zi Yue

Regulars Zi Yue retake the stage on Saturday night.

Where: New Get Lucky, Tianze Lu, A1 Dongfang Qicai Dashijie in Laitai Flower Market, Chaoyang **When:** Saturday, 9 pm **Admission:** 50 yuan **Tel:** 8448 3335



Jazz

Sabrina Montgomery sings silky renditions of jazz standards and takes requests, every night except Sundays.

Where: Centro, lobby of Kerry

Centre hotel, 1 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang **When:** 6-10 pm **Tel:** 6561 8833

Singles Night

Bring your friends, or come to meet new ones or that special someone. The action will be swinging and ladies drink free. No entrance charge.

Where: Logos, Tianze Lu, near Laitai Flower Market, Chaoyang **When:** Tonight, 8 pm **Tel:** 8638 1832

International Dance Trip

The Kongkong Dance Workshop gives an afternoon performance of two different styles of dances – flamenco and salsa – as part of its International Dance Trip series.

Where: Harts, Sanlitun South Bar Street, Chaoyang **When:** Sunday, 3 pm **Admission:** 30 yuan (includes one drink) **Tel:** 6504 6010

Activities

BJ Hikers

Walk through a valley cut by a small stream that creates a microclimate in the mountains. The clear, cool water is home to visible creatures and is dotted with swimming holes, the largest of which is called Dragon Pool. Hikers can enjoy a break and take a dip in this deep pool naturally carved into a huge granite boulder. We will then follow the stream to a park entrance and carry on, passing through villages outside the park where there are views of the Great Wall.

Where: Huarirou county, north of Beijing **When:** Sunday, pick up at 8 am at Lido Hotel, outside Starbucks **Cost:** 150 yuan (100 yuan for children under 12) **Tel:** 13910025516

Happy Hour at Zing in the Park

Enjoy a fling at Zing, the latest addition to Beijing's nightlife scene offering fabulous fusion-style food and great drinks in a chic environment nestled in the park. A live saxophonist will make way at 10 pm for a DJ spinning house, funk and acid jazz.

Where: Zing in the Park, south Gate of Ritan Park **When:** August 18, 6:30 pm **Tel:** 8562 2308

Tour: Eunuch Tombs Complex and Temple

Chinese Culture Club takes you to the west of Beijing to explore two neglected but fascinating sites. The Eunuch Tombs are nestled in the hills in a modest, peaceful backwater. The sites are listed as state protected relics and boast the second largest murals in China, painted by artists of the Ming court.

Where: meet at Chinese Culture Club (29 Anjialou, Liangmaqiao Road, Chaoyang) to catch the bus **When:** Sunday, 10 am **Cost:** 150 yuan (members: 130 yuan)

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HBO

13 Friday

Stuart Little 2 9:00 pm

14 Saturday

Maid in Manhattan 9:00 pm

15 Sunday

Path to War 11:25 pm

16 Monday

Dragonstorm 9:00 pm

17 Tuesday

Men in Black II 8:30 pm

18 Wednesday

Desperado 9:00 pm

19 Thursday

Reckless Kelly 10:30 pm

CCTV-9

Monday – Friday

Around China 6:30 am

Cultural Express 8:30 am

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 11:30 am

Cultural Express 2:30 pm

Nature and Science /

Chinese Civilization 5:30 pm

Dialogue 7:30 pm

News Updates /

Asia Today 8 pm

Sports Scene 11:15 pm

Saturday

Travelogue 9:30 am

Center Stage 11:30 am

Sunday

Sports Weekend 10 am

Documentary 10:30 am

This Week 12:30 am

China Radio International 91.5 FM

Monday – Friday

Easy FM Afternoon 2-7 pm

Fun in Beijing 5-5:30 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Saturday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Euro Hit 40 12:05-1 pm

Music Sans Frontiers 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

Sunday

Music Memories 8:05-11 am

Jazz Beat 6:05-8 pm

Joy FM 9:05-11 pm

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ynet.com or call 6590 2518

By Zhang Jianzhong





Detail of Xumi Pagoda

By Ian Provan

Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei Province, may well have numerous unsung merits, however descriptions of the city are probably more likely to center around terms such as “industrial” and “factories,” as opposed to, say, “scenic” and “cultural relics.”

In fact the rise of Shijiazhuang is a relatively recent phenomenon. It took over the mantle of provincial capital from Tianjin when that city was excised from Hebei and made a special municipality, along with Beijing, Shanghai and more recently, Chongqing. But prior to around 100 years ago, it was a village of little significance, eclipsed for a millennium or so by neighboring Zhengding (正定), just 18 kilometers to the north, the most important town in the general vicinity. These days, trains from Beijing pass through Zhengding shortly before arriving at Shijiazhuang, but only the slowest of the slow deign to actually stop there.

Like Pingyao, in neighboring Shanxi Province, Zhengding is an ancient, walled town with a rich architectural heritage. Unlike Pingyao, very little of the old town remains standing. And with the exception of restored sections around the south and west gates, most of what remains of the wall is little more than a crumbling, overgrown, earthen mound, bricks long gone.

What does remain standing, however – four Tang Dynasty pagodas and one beautifully preserved temple – provide enough reason to spend a day, or perhaps a weekend, exploring Zhengding. It is an easy escape from Beijing, and far enough away from the smokestacks of Shijiazhuang to qualify as a rural retreat.

Most sites of interest are in the vicinity of the old main street, which now bears the name Zhengding Lishi Wenhua Jie (Zhengding Historic and Cultural Street), and Zhongshan Donglu. Historic and Cultural Street runs north from the south gate, called Changlemo (长东门), which is currently under reconstruction.

The first landmark inside the gate is Hua Pagoda, virtually all that is left of Guanghui Temple. The 33-meter pagoda was built during the Tang Dynasty and is decorated with unusual animal motifs. The top floor of the pagoda offers a good view of Zhengding's three other pagodas, the remains of the south-east section of wall and the distant roof tops of Longxing Temple. Entry to the temple courtyard costs 5 yuan.

A little further north is Linji Temple and Chenglin Pagoda. Linji Temple covers a much larger area than Guanghui and many of the halls are currently being reconstructed or renovated. There is a sizeable population of monks, who live in newly built dormitories along the eastern side of the temple. According to a timetable posted outside one of the halls, the monks start their daily classes at 4 am, before taking a break at 6 for breakfast. The elegant Chengling Pagoda in the center of the temple, was also built during the Tang Dynasty.

To the north-west of Linji Temple is Kaiyuan Temple, which houses Xumi Pagoda and a wooden, two-storey bell tower. Xumi Pagoda dates back to the early Tang Dynasty. Visitors can enter the ground floor of the pagoda, but there is no staircase to the upper floors. At the base at each corner of the four-sided structure are relief carvings of muscly figures who appear to be supporting the pagoda.

The bell tower, which has been extensively restored, is one of the oldest standing wooden structures in China. Dating back to the

mid-Tang Dynasty, it stands over a sealed underground chamber that once housed the temple's most precious artifacts, including a bone fragment said to have come from a Buddha. The temple is somewhat unusual, in that the entire complex is set some two meters below ground level.

The northern end of Historic and Cultural Street intersects with Zhongshan Lu, at the western end of which is Wen Miao, a Confucian temple. East along Zhongshan Lu is the fourth pagoda, Lingxiao Pagoda, at Tianning Temple. Although there is little remaining of Tianning Temple other than the Tang Dynasty pagoda, it is set in a very pretty garden, all flowers and peaceful surroundings.

A small sign just inside the entrance of the pagoda warns, somewhat mystifyingly, that it should take at least 15 minutes to climb the stairs to the top. Mystifyingly until one turns a corner after the first few stairs into a pitch black corridor. There are no windows in the lowest levels and visitors have to feel their way along and up the precipitous stairs. Fortunately this situation doesn't last long, it gets lighter the higher you go.

The view from the top is not quite as panoramic as it might be – the four windows are tiny and covered with heavy wire netting, presumably to discourage small animals from committing suicide, making it difficult to see very much, let alone take a decent photo. Having ascertained on the way up that there are no missing steps or potholes, going down in pitch darkness seems a little easier than the ascent.

A hundred meters or so east along Zhongshan Lu is the most intact of Zhengding's temples, Longxing Temple, known locally as Dafosi, or Big Buddha Temple. Longxing Temple is Zhengding's primary claim to fame, and the reason the town even rates a mention in Chinese middle school textbooks. It is among the first group of structures to be listed by the government in 1961 as a state level protected cultural relic. Although the temple dates back to the Sui Dynasty (581-618), it is described as a Song Dynasty style temple. Most of the structures have been estored at various times over the past thousand or so years.

The Pavilion of Great Benevolence, originally built in 971 during the Song Dynasty and rebuilt during the Qing, houses a huge bronze statue of Guanyin, the Goddess of Mercy. The upper part of the 21.3 meter statue, also cast during the Song Dynasty, can be seen from the second floor of the hall. From the second floor, one can also gain access to the two smaller halls on either side of the Pavilion of Great Benevolence.

There is a large statue of Milefo, or Laughing Buddha, in the Manichaean Hall, which also contains several well preserved murals painted in 1563, during the Ming Dynasty.

Accommodation: There is a small guesthouse next to Longxing Temple (and a restaurant offering vegetarian and non-vegetarian fare). Two bed rooms are 120 yuan or 198 yuan with bathroom.

Getting there: There are frequent trains between Beijing and Shijiazhuang, which can take anywhere between two-and-a-half to four hours, depending on whether you end up on a special express, express, or – worst case scenario – an “ordinary express,” which tend to stop at anything even remotely resembling a station, platform or siding. From Shijiazhuang, opposite the railway station, take bus 201 to Longxing Temple in Zhengding, or hire a taxi for the 20 kilometer trip.



Chenglin Pagoda



Bell tower at Kaiyuan Temple



Lingxiao Pagoda

Photos by Ian Provan



Xumi Pagoda

Tonglicheng

Local Escapes

Primeval Tribe Experience

By Hou Mingxin

This week *Beijing Today* introduces a holiday resort named Yuran Primeval Tribe Amusement Park, located at the foot of Mutianyu Great Wall.

Divided into several “zones,” the park claims to recreate the living style and environment of various primitive tribes from Asia, Africa, the Americas and Oceania

Visitors can attempt to catch fish with a spear in the Fish Culture Zone, or try their hand at archery in the Hunting Zone. There is also a Dyeing Zone, for those with a penchant for do-it-yourself ‘60s gear, a Rowing Zone and a Dancing Zone.

The park also has a paintball program for the more military minded. Organize a couple of teams and come along for a weekend battle for supremacy.

Just 15 kilometers northwest of Huairou, the park is not far from Hongluo Temple, another popular tourist spot.

Accommodation: There is a two-star hotel on site – 220 yuan for a twin-bed room, 420 yuan for an apartment style room.

Getting there: Take bus 936 or 916 from Dongzhimen Bus Station at 7:10 or 10 am to Huairou, then taxi to Yuran Primeval Tribe Amusement Park. Alternatively, drive toward Mutianyu Great Wall, turn left at the large sign for the park about two kilometers before Mutianyu.



Photo by Hou Mingxin

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